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ABSTRACT

This publication contains case studies of the educational decision-making process in New South Wales and other Australian states. According to the publication, some form of school council or board is the most common decision-making structure used in the schools. A selection of the structures currently being used that involve community representatives as well as professional staff is described. Case studies are discussed under the following topics: state school systems, Catholic systemic schools, independent schools, school advisory councils, committee structures, boards of management, and overseas schools. Sources for further information are given at the end of each case study. (Author/LD)

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STRUCTURES
FOR
SCHOOL-COMMUNITY BASED
DECISION SHARING

Greg Andrews

NSW SCHOOL BASED DECISION SHARING PROJECT
1980

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This book is one of a series of occasional publications produced by the N.S.W. School Based Decision Sharing Project.

The project is a co-operative activity involving the N.S.W. Department of Education, the Catholic Education Commission, the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of N.S.W., the N.S.W. Federation of School Community Organisations, the N.S.W. Teachers' Federation, and the Independent Teacher's Association. It is directed by a committee of representatives from these organisations and has appointed a full time project officer.

The project aims to assist school authorities, parent and teacher organisations, and individual parents, teachers and community members in understanding the rationale underlying school based decision sharing; current practices in New South Wales and other Australian states; the problems involved; and the conditions and strategies that are required to facilitate progress towards further devolution in education.

The project is supported by a grant from the Commonwealth under the Special Projects Program of the Schools Commission. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent the views of the Schools Commission.

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INTRODUCTION

The last ten years has witnessed a major trend throughout the western world of moving responsibility for educational decision-making away from central authorities to more localised levels. This move has been prompted by a number of forces: the demand for participation from parents and students; the expanding view of professionalism being taken by teachers; the general political trend to consultation in decision-making; and the search by administrators for increased effectiveness and sensitivity in providing services.

The principles on which this move towards devolution are based are firstly, that decisions should be made as close to the learning situation as possible, and secondly that the decisions should be shared by those they directly affect. The school itself thus becomes the main arena of educational decision-making and the participants are the key members of the school community - teachers, parents and students.

With schools taking on an ever increasing responsibility for a wide variety of decisions, the need for consultation in the decision-making process has become more apparent in the quest to gain consent, commitment and legitimation for the decisions made. Paralleling this need has been the development of formal and informal decision-making structures to fascilitate the consultation process. Different schools and different systems have developed their own particular models though some form of school council or board has emerged as the most common structure for corporate decision making.

This book contains descriptions of a selection of those structures currently being used in schools throughout Australia that involve community representatives as well as professional staff[1]. Their form and characteristics vary considerably, particularly in terms of their formal powers and mandated areas of concern.

At the more informal level, consultation with the client community is sought through the inclusion of parents on ad hoc working committees normally made up of school staff. Such committees are characterised by specific focus and intent for which the members have a personal interest (if voluntary membership) or pragmatic concern. They have delegated responsibility usually to make recommendations to the school principal or executive for decision. In other cases, committees in practice make decisions on behalf of the school which are implemented under the authority of the principal or school council who have delegated responsibility for the process of decision making while retaining the veto power and liability which must flow from their legal responsibility. An example of this form of decision making model is the council sub-committee structure operating at Morialta High School (Case Study 16).

Attempts to incorporate the opinions and resources of community representatives into a more formal vehicle to assist school decision making have come in the form of school advisory councils.

Aimed at generating better decisions through the input of an informed consensus from a representative body, school advisory councils vary widely in this mandate and effectiveness in influencing decisions made in the school. At their best, advisory councils are a means for broadening

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1. For descriptions of internal school decision-making structures see - Lovegrove, E. & Parsons, R. Staff Participation in Decision Making: A Study of Ten Australian Secondary Schools. Research and Planning Directorate, South Australian Education Department, 1979.

the base of decision making responsibility where the legal responsibility cannot be delegated (see Case Study 21). At their worst, advisory councils are a tokenistic avenue of presenting the illusion of participatory decision-making while in reality acting as a means of stifling community pressure on the school through co-option or the tactic of absorbing people's time and energy in a decision making process where the advice is ignored and the council has no power to implement. In the United States where advisory councils are in wide use and involve an estimated 1,200,000 non-professional members, a three year evaluation study commissioned by the National Institute of Education has concluded that while advisory councils have considerable unrealised potential for productively sharing power and developing partnerships between citizens and professional educators, they are by and large ineffective vehicles for parents and community people to affect educational policy making[1]. This is largely the product of their not having any substantive influence on the three key areas of educational policy: the school budget, personnel and the school programme.

Boards of management are another widely used decision making structure in use throughout Australia, particularly in the private sector. Usually created as a means of establishing a school (quite often through the formation of a company or in some cases through an Act of Parliament) a majority of boards are based on the corporate model of the business world and act primarily as the finance raisers and managers. For many of the boards their only influence on educational policy in the school is in the selection of the school principal to whom full control over staffing and curriculum matters is delegated. In some of the smaller 'alternative' schools, the board on the other hand has total control over educational policy and staffing.

In relation to the number of schools and the uniformity of provision, the most significant development in terms of school-community based decision-making structures are the school councils and boards of the government education systems in Victoria, South Australia and the A.C.T. Established through legislation these models are characterised by a legal base with wide ranging powers and responsibilities (see Case Studies 1-4) and a representative membership nominated through a process of formal elections. All are still in their infancy and their potential as decision making bodies is still being explored in action.

Data on the effectiveness of all of these different structures is still to be gathered. The crucial elements of success for all of them tend to be not so much the scope of their mandated functions but the quality of the interelationships they have with the school's professional executive and the degree of fit they have with the internal decision making structures of the school. It is clear that a decision-making structure involving both school and community people cannot be simply grafted onto an ongoing decision making organisation like a school without some degree of confusion or resistance arising and the subsequent need to make adjustments to the operation of both structure and organisation. Also, the ability of any decision-making body to perform its functions effectively will be dependent on a clear understanding between itself and the school staff and system authorities it works with of its place in the flow of information, communication, authority and accountability that makes up the system of policy making for any school or system.

Such things are usually in dynamic flux and are part of the broader

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1. Davies, D. et al. Patterns of Citizen Participation in Educational Decision Making, Vol.11. Institute of Responsive Education, Boston University, 1979.

evolutionary process of organisational development and educational change. The structures described in this book are not static even if their brief is. People wanting to explore any case study more can obtain further information from the sources mentioned at the end of each study from which the data for this book primarily came.

Greg Andrews

STATE SCHOOL SYSTEMS

CASE STUDY 1: A.C.T. SCHOOL BOARDS

Legal Basis

School boards were established in the A.C.T. in 1974 by the Interim A.C.T. Schools Authority and their brief was later enshrined in the Schools Authority Ordinance 1976. The A.C.T. Schools Authority is a statutory government authority. Boards are part of this authority and as such cannot be bodies corporate with the right to sue and be sued, hold land, and represent the crown for example, as is the case with Victorian School Councils.

Membership

All schools have boards made up of:-

- the principal
- 1 member appointed by the Schools Authority
- 2 members elected by the teaching staff
- 3 members elected to represent parents and citizens

High schools and colleges have 2 members elected by the students and may co-opt up to 3 non-voting members. Primary schools may co-opt up to 2 non-voting members.

The chairperson of the board is elected by its members and cannot be the principal or a teacher employed at the school.

Functions

The Schools Authority Ordinance 1976 specifies the following functions for school boards:-

a) to determine the educational policies to be implemented at the school;

b) to assess, from time to time, the needs of the school in relation to the provision of buildings and facilities, equipment, funds and teachers and other staff and make recommendations to the Authority with respect to the meeting of those needs;

c) to determine the purposes for which funds made available for the school are to be expended;

d) to make recommendations to the Authority in respect of the use of the buildings, facilities and equipment of the school for purposes other than school purposes;

e) to develop relationships between the school and the community and between the school and community organisations;

f) to make recommendations to the Authority on matters relating to the school; and

g) such other functions as the Authority confers upon the board.

Powers

The Ordinance empowers each school board to do those things necessary for

it to carry out its duties. The boundary of that power is that the actions of the board must not affect the performance of duties and power of the Schools Authority itself. The Schools Authority in its conduct of a school also is not required to accept or act in accordance with board recommendations or implement any policies they determine.

The scope of power exercised by school boards is therefore very much at the discretion of the Schools Authority.

Responsibilities

The Ordinance specifies that boards must report on their operation four times a year in writing to:

a) the parents of students at the school
b) teachers employed at the school
c) in the case of high schools and colleges to students at the school

Meetings

Meetings are convened by the chairperson or the Principal if the chairperson is not available. The Schools Authority through its chairperson or through the Chief Education Officer can also request that meetings be held. A quorum for a primary school board is 4 members at least one of which must be a teacher representative, and one a parent representative. A quorum for a high school or secondary college board is 5 members with at least one being a teacher representative and one a parent representative. Normally meetings take place monthly. Any board member may raise matters which could be considered by the board, and decisions are made by general agreement or by a vote of members. Meetings are open.

Tenure

Members of school boards normally hold office for one year terms though the Schools Authority can direct that the term of office of members be extended for an extra year. Elected members are eligible for re-election. The Schools Authority may remove board members from office for misbehaviour or where members have been absent from 3 consecutive meetings without leave being granted by the board.

Support

On day to day matters the school principal acts as the executive officer of the board implementing in the school those decisions upon which the board has agreed. The Schools Authority pays around $400 to the boards each year for their administration costs. The chairperson of the board and the principal are signatories to this account.

Involvement in Curriculum

Boards are required by the Ordinance to devise the school policy within the Authority's guidelines. This means that they are to formulate the guiding aims of the school against which decisions on curriculum and administration are made. Technically if a difference arises between policy and administration, the board decides the policy and the principal must then implement it. Usually a sub-committee is set up to prepare the

school philosophy statement which is then submitted to the board for approval.

In high schools and secondary colleges courses must be registered and secondary college courses must be accredited. These processes involve a formal submission of the course, together with a supporting statement from the school board to the Schools Authority. Accreditation is for 5 years and any changes due to staff turnover etc. requires a fresh accreditation process. All courses are automatically resubmitted to the Authority every 4 years so this procedure of review and evaluation of school courses confronts school boards at regular intervals.

The Authority does not expect boards to become involved in the finer points of content, details of implementation, teaching methods or the use of particular texts but they are expected to review courses against the philosophy they have set for the school.

Many boards set up sub-committees (usually of all three staff members and some parent members) to conduct the detailed review of courses and report and make recommendations to the board on other curriculum issues. The amount of time boards spend in discussing proposed courses varies from board to board and while most courses are endorsed after consideration, there are cases where teachers are called in to explain details of courses, and occasionally there have been cases where re-drafts of courses have been requested or courses not endorsed.

Involvement in Finance

The Ordinance says that the board should determine the purposes to which funds made available for the school are to be spent. Boards are not involved with budgeting and spending on routine services such a telephone and electricity but are required to budget for the school's expenditures on items such as stores and supplies, equipment, books, grants for special educational programs, library and science purchases. The school budget is made up of an annual grant from the Authority, textbook allowances, funds contributed from the P & C Association and any money which is likely to be contributed by parents (e.g. fees).

A.C.T. high schools are currently handling in the vicinity of $45,000 a year, and primary schools $15,000.

Involvement in Staffing

School boards in the A.C.T. may take recommendations to the Schools Authority on staffing requirements for the school. Acting with the principal, boards are able to express their wishes on staff to the Authority although the Authority does not have to accept their advice. The principal makes the only school level decisions on staffing, and for the schools negotiations becomes a member of the staff selection committee at Authority level. The principal selects ancillary staff from an Authority prepared shortlist. Teachers are able to apply for service in schools of their choice.

School boards have the responsibility for drawing up job specifications which outline the curriculum and other duties of school staff members who are selected and appointed centrally. Usually this duty statement is prepared by the staff, principal or staffing committee and presented to the board for endorsement or modification.

Relationship of Principals to School Boards

The principal is a full voting member of the board, its chief adviser and executive member. This arrangement is based on the concept of the principal in council making decisions on policy for the school. The boards of course, are dependent upon the information supplied to them by the principal and in practice most boards and principals have worked out a good relationship based on trust and recognition of the principal's professional expertise.

Relationship of Parent Associations to School Boards

Board elections are conducted through the P & C Association and boards report back to the parents through the P & C Association. Board members usually attend the monthly association meetings, taking information from the board and answering questions raised by parents and citizens. The Parent Associations and clubs have continued to function in much the same way as before raising money, holding social functions and promoting discussion on school matters between staff and parents. Money raised can still be donated directly to the school and the P & C Association can still make its own purchases for the school.

In many schools Associations have taken on a new lease of life with the introduction of boards, becoming forums for wider debate of issues being discussed by the board.

Further Information

- Mary Lovett, A.C.T. Schools Authority, P.O. Box 20, Civic Square, A.C.T. 2608. (062) 490236
- School and Community Project, School Boards in the Australian Capital Territory, School of Teacher Education, Canberra College of Advanced Education, P.O. Box 1, Belconnen, A.C.T. 2616.

CASE STUDY 2: SOUTH AUSTRALIA SCHOOL COUNCILS

Legal Basis

School committees and councils with clearly circumscribed functions have been in operation in South Australia since the 1915 Education Act. The major activity of these bodies was in the area of fund raising for the provision of equipment and the maintenance of school grounds. A significant redefinition of their nature and function came about with the passage of the 1972 Education Act. School Councils now operate in accordance with regulations under this Act, first gazetted in March, 1973. Councils are body corporates, i.e. they can hold and deal in property, borrow money, sue and be sued.

Membership

Within certain limits each school has some freedom in determining the size and composition of its council. The minimum number is 5 and normal maximum is 19. Councils consist of the following people:

- persons elected at an annual meeting
- the head teacher and infant mistress (where applicable) ex officio
- elected staff members according to an enrolment scale:-

No. of Students	No. of Elected Staff
60 or less	nil
61 - 300	1
301 - 600	2
600 plus	3

- one elected member of each affiliated school organisation
- members co-opted by the foregoing members

and in addition for secondary and area schools:-

- a member nominated by the House of Assembly for the district
- a member nominated by local government

and in addition, if the school council so decides -

- elected senior secondary students.

Parent members must be greater than half the total members.

Functions

The legal role of the council is:-

(i) to exercise a general oversight over the well-being of the school;

(ii) to advise the head teacher as necessary on the correlation between the work of the school and the educational needs of the district;

(iii) to note the accommodation, grounds and equipment provided at the school and to advise the Director-General through the head teacher of any alterations, additions and replacements considered necessary;

(iv) by agreement with the head teacher, to decide on the distribution of any grant made to the school council by the Minister. Where agreement cannot be reached the matter

shall be referred to the Director-General for a decision and his decision shall be final.

(v) to consider in broad outline the general educational policy within the school, of which the head teacher shall keep the school council continuously informed, and advise him of the considered view of the local community regarding educational developments within the school.

(vi) to keep proper books of account and to ensure their audit at least once each year, and to make such books available on due notice to any person authorised by the Director-General or the Auditor-General.

(vii) to carry out such other duties as are prescribed by these regulations or required by the Minister.

Powers

School councils can exercise those powers that stem from being a body corporate in the performance of their specified duties.

Responsibilities

An annual general meeting is required at which elections for council membership are held and reports and audited statements of council receipts and expenditures are presented. This meeting is called by the school principal and is chaired by the principal or his or her nominee. Council books of account which deal with grants supplied by the Education Department must be available for inspection by nominated departmental officers at any time.

Meetings

The number, conduct and procedure for calling meetings is the responsibility of each school council. A quorum is made up of at least half the members. Decisions are by majority vote with the chairperson having a deliberative vote. Councils may appoint sub-committees that can contain people who are not council members.

Tenure

The term of office for members apart from the principal and infants mistress is two years. A system of annual retirements for half the members operates to ensure some continuity of membership.

Further Information

. South Australian Department of Education,
31 Flinders Street, Adelaide. 5000. (08) 227 9911

CASE STUDY 3: TASMANIA BOARDS OF ADVICE

Legal Basis

Section 14 of the Education Act (1973) allows that the Governor may, by order, establish a board of advice for any state school or any group of state schools and make provision for its constitution and proceedings. The Act also says that the council of a municipality shall be the board of advice for each state school in the municipality for which a board of advice is not established under the above provision. This is not acted upon in reality. At the end of 1979, only six state schools had set up some form of school council structure.

Duties

The Education Act (1973) specifies the following duties for boards of advice:-

a) to maintain close contact with the school and its activities;

b) to advise the Minister in all matters connected with the education of children attending the school or residing in the area in which it is situated;

c) to use every endeavour to induce parents to send their children to school regularly;

d) to give assistance in such matters arising in connection with the school as the Minister may refer to the board; and

e) to determine such matters in relation to the school as the Minister may authorise the board to determine.

Powers

Boards may also:-

i) cause repairs and works of maintenance to be made to the school premises;
ii) allow the use of the school premises for other than school purposes.

The Act also specifies that boards shall:

- not exercise their powers in such a manner as to interfere with the use of the school premises for the purposes of the school;
- have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the views of the parents of the children attending the school and for that purpose shall maintain close contact with organisations of, or representing those parents;
- in exercising their functions, conform with directions that may be given by the Minister.

Overview

"At this stage the policy of the Education Department is to facilitate the development of decision-making mechanisms which are consistent with the needs and wishes of a school and its community.

Therefore it is not intended to impose any one pattern on schools but to endorse the desirability of decision-making at school level developing in a diversity of ways according to local needs.

If a school believes that such decision-making may be improved by the establishment of a Board of Management it is important that it knows very clearly why it is setting it up and for it to specify clearly its function and what it might expect from the membership of the board.

Apart from these considerations it is important to have a board membership which reflects the diversity of a school's enrolment and the expertise which is present in the community.

The guiding principle should be that decision-making remains the responsibility of the school and that the establishment of the board should be in the context of enhancing the quality of decisions taken in the best interests of children."

(from a letter from the Director-General quoted in Parent, August, 1979).

Further Information

. Jan Edwards Development and Information Services,
Department of Education, 6th Floor,
152 Macquarie Street, Hobart. 7000 (002) 308022

Legal Basis

School councils are established under the provision of the Education Act 1958 as amended by the Education (School Councils) Act 1975 which sets out the duties and powers of school councils. Other acts are also relevant for councils. The Education (Volunteer Workers Compensation) Act 1975 provides workers compensation for voluntary assistants in state schools, and section 16 of the Youth, Sport and Recreation Act 1972 allows councils to authorise use of school buildings, grounds or equipment. Councils are body corporates. The 1975 acts actually re-organised and expanded the functions and powers of school councils which had existed previously in some form for many years. Councils can be constituted in relation to a single school or a group of schools.

Membership

School councils in Victoria have a wide variety of composition. In the public debate on composition that took place prior to the council re-organisation in 1975, different views were presented by parent groups, teacher unions and principal's associations. The government compromised by offering a choice of four composition options, the fourth option being any combination of membership which is agreed to by the existing school council, principal and staff, parents and members of the community of a particular school. A majority of schools decided to change the composition of their existing school council or school committee.

All technical schools, 82% of high schools and 47% of primary schools chose the 'D' option, a council of their own design. The most common format in primary schools choosing this option was a council of parents, welfare representatives (usually of mothers' clubs), teachers and co-opted members. Secondary schools generally added municipal representatives but technical schools differed from high schools by preferring to nominate rather than co-opt members to their councils.

Changes in membership have tended to make school councils more representative of their staffs but less so of parents and other people. High schools and technical schools favoured councils of 14 to 17 members and primary schools 10 to 13 members on average.

The principal on all councils is an ex-officio, non-voting member and its executive officer. The president is elected but cannot be the principal or any other person in paid employment at the school.

Functions

The Education (School Councils) Act 1975 specifies the following duties for councils:-

a) tender advice to the principal and staff of the school as regards the general educational policy which might be followed in the conduct of the school;

b) exercise a general oversight of the buildings and grounds and ensure that they are kept in good order and condition;

c) make any recommendation it thinks necessary for or with respect to the replacement extension or alteration of any

buildings, and generally for or with respect to the making of improvements to the buildings and grounds;

d) provide for the necessary cleaning and sanitary services;

e) ensure that all moneys coming into the hands of the council are expended for proper purposes;

f) endeavour to arrange suitable accommodation for teachers appointed to the school;

g) carry out any other prescribed duties; and

h) generally stimulate interest in the school.

Powers

The school council is charged with the above functions as duties. In addition, councils may also do any of the following:-

- conduct general educational activities for the benefit of the local community at any time when any school buildings or grounds are not required for ordinary school purposes;
- provide meals or refreshments for the staff or students and make charges;
- within staffing establishments fixed by the Minister -
  a) employ any staff other than teaching staff to assist in the work of the council or of the school or (as the case may be) any school in the group in relation to which the council is constituted;
  b) after considering any recommendations made by the principal and staff of the school or (as the case may be) any school in the group in that connection, employ part-time teachers on a sessional basis for the purpose of -
     (i) teaching pupils in post-secondary evening classes; or
     (ii) teaching subject which require the employment of persons with current industrial or commercial experience;
  c) after considering any recommendations made by the principal and staff on the school or (as the case may be) any school in the group in that connection, employ teacher aides to assist teachers in educational activities of the school; and
  d) employ any person to conduct any general educational activities for the benefit of the local community.
- with the Minister's approval -
  a) construct or carry out any building structure or improvements in or to the school grounds; or
  b) enter into a contract with any person for or in relation to the construction or carrying out by that person of any such building structure or improvements or of any other work which the council is authorised or required by or under the Act to carry out.
- obtain and accept offers or tenders for any work which it proposes to carry out which is approved by the Minister.

In addition to these powers, councils may authorise any voluntary organisation, Government Department municipality, person or body to use any of the school grounds or buildings subject to the conditions it imposes.

Responsibilities

Councils are required to have their accounts audited annually and to hold a public meeting once a year where they report on the preceeding year's activities and present a copy of the audited statement of receipts and expenditure and a current statement of finances.

Meetings

Meetings are convened by the president of the council and must be held at least eight times a year. In large schools they normally are held on a monthly basis. A quorum is a third of the members. The decision of the majority is the decision of the council and on split issues the presiding officer has the casting vote.

Tenure

For their first three years of operation, the re-organised council had three year terms for their members. Councils were able to review their operations in the 1978-79 period and recommend changes to their composition and tenure regulations. Subsequently, there now exists a variety of tenure regulations among councils. Some have 2, 3 or 4 year appointments, and some retire half their members every 2 years, some every 4 years.

Support

On day to day matters the school principal acts as the executive officer of the council. In respect of the Schools Grant that each school receives, it is implied that the school administration has the obligation of supporting the council's activities. No separate financial grant is given to councils for their own administrative expenses.

Involvement in Curriculum

The duties of councils include the tendering of advice to the principal and staff as regards the general educational policy which might be followed in the conduct of the school. Whether councils actually do this or not, and whether the advice is sought or not, or acted upon or not when it is given varies from school to school. The question of how far the tasks of management should or could impinge on decisions about educational policy is still an issue that needs to be clarified in Victorian government schools. Within certain limits school councils have the opportunity to formulate policy on such matters as the funding of books, materials and equipment. These decisions can influence or at least be perceived to affect educational policy and practice. The responsibility for policy and curriculum issues still remains, however, with the principal. The setting up of education committees has been one way of approaching the question of the relationship between financial control and school policy. About one in five schools have formed special council sub-committees to deal with education policy. These committees are more common in high schools than technical schools or primary schools. Some schools use these sub-committees or the council itself as a forum for discussion about changes in and development of new aspects of the curriculum. In some schools the principal presents details of proposed new courses to the school council for their information which in fact works as an informal process of council endorsement.

Involvement in Finance

The school council is charged with the duty of ensuring that all moneys coming into its hands are expended for proper purposes. Since late 1977 all school grants were banked directly to the credit of school council accounts. Overall, these amounted to approximately 10% of the total recurrent expenditure allocated to schools. The nature of the allocations in the different divisions varies. Technical high schools, for example, receive up to approximately 30% of their total recurrent grant direct (most technical schools have a bursar as well). The school council is responsible for the control of these funds. All cheques drawn on council accounts require two signatures: the principal together with the president or other nominated officer of the council. Schools receive regular grants to enable them to maintain school plant and facilities. These moneys are meant to meet the costs of cleaning and sanitary services as well as minor purchases, repairs and renovations. There is no compulsion on a school council to spend grant funds in accordance with the formula adopted to determine their allocation. As councils can determine who can use school facilities and under what conditions, they are entitled to cover costs of additional cleaning, security etc. and to maintain any on-going community education program expenses through revenue raised from facility letting. Additionally, while councils lack the authority to borrow money, a school community may raise additional funds by forming a co-operative society.

The responsibility of councils for school finance is both an administrative burden and a source of educational influence. The preparation of annual budgets is closely connected to the general accountability of councils for particular policies they decide to follow. In the Burwood State College study of school council operation, 75% of councils surveyed reported that they were usefully involved in budget preparation. Much of the claimed participation however, appeared to be superficial on investigation, the function of the council often being to rubber stamp the work of the principal. Budgets also appeared to have been developed very rarely as part of a school policy facilitated and implemented by council and staff.

Involvement in Staffing

Under the legislation, school councils in Victorian government schools have the power to employ non-teaching staff, part-time teaching staff for special subjects (e.g. post-secondary evening classes or subjects requiring persons with current industrial or commercial experience), teacher aides and people to engage in community education activities. These powers are restricted, however, by the lack of funds to employ people. Very few schools employ extra staff from locally raised funds. Government establishments pay wages for clerical assistants, cleaners, library and laboratory assistants, some community education officers and some teacher aides. Teacher aides are more commonly paid with Supplementary Grants money (i.e. Disadvantaged Schools Program) and some community education officers and other personnel are paid for through Schools Commission Innovation grants made to school council members. All categories, however, can be selected and made responsible to sschool councils though they are usually centrally paid. The only direct involvement of councils in selection of teaching staff is in the technical high school division where there is provision for local representative school committees (almost invariably including a school council member) to make recommendations on the selection of principals and deputy principals after interviewing applicants from a centrally issued short list of eligible applicants.

Relationship of Principals to Councils

Principals are ex-officio, non-voting members of all school councils. As the composition of school councils varies enormously, so do the relationships between principals and school councils. The Burwood State College survey found that 75% of principals in primary schools expressed positive attitudes towards the general operation of councils and 50% of high school principals, though in general, principals appeared less positive than the councils themselves about the effects of the new legislation. Under the new set up it is difficult or near impossible for principals to maintain a facade of school-community participation.

Uncertain or negative attitudes of principals related especially to professional roles and financial planning. Where the boundaries for responsible action remained clearly defined and mutually observed, little conflict between principals and councils occurred.

Relationships of Parent Associations to School Councils

The regulations applying to welfare bodies such as Parents' and Mothers' Clubs were not altered when the new legislation establishing school councils came into being and the relationship between the school and the welfare bodies basically remains the same as it was. The school council legislation, however, gives added emphasis to the need to achieve good communication, wide involvement and agreement within the school community. Sensible management, open communication and the audit requirements all point to the need for schools to develop overall financial planning for instance. Close involvement of councils and parent bodies that raise funds is therefore very common in most schools.

Further Information

- Ian Spalding School Council Section, Planning Services, Department of Education, 14th Floor, Nauru House, 80 Collins Street, Melbourne. 3000 (03) 651 0011
- R.T. Fitzgerald & D.W. Pettit, The New School Councils Burwood State College Monograph Series No.3, 1978.

CATHOLIC SYSTEMIC SCHOOLS

CASE STUDY 5: SOUTH AUSTRALIA CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARDS

Legal Basis

School boards were set up in 1969 to manage the financial affairs of schools. Their powers were widened in 1976 for an involvement in decision-making on general educational matters. These powers are set out in the 1976 School Board Manual. The boards are constituted through Parish School Board agreements promulgated by the Archbishops of Adelaide and Port Pirie and revised from time to time by the Commission for Catholic Schools. Every systemic school has a board.

Membership

School boards consist of the following members:-

- the parish priest or administrator of the parish (ex-officio)
- the principal (ex-officio)
- the local community superior or representative appointed by the religious order responsible for religious appointments in that school where the principal is a lay person (ex-officio)
- four elected parents
- one person elected by the parish pastoral council
- one person elected by the school staff
- up to four other members appointed by the ex-officio members jointly after consultation with the others.

No employee of the school can be the chairperson. The parish priest or administrator is the president, ex-officio.

Functions

The two main functions are to ensure that the school fulfils its christian educational responsibility and to administer school finances.

Where possible the board is to assist the principal and staff with the formulation of school policies and educational objectives. Also, where possible the board is to assist with the development of suitable learning programs to meet the educational needs of the community that the school serves.

The school board is responsible for the financial administration of the school. It is required to account for and administer all income and expenditure of the school. Expenditure covers the whole range of costs, from maintenance work to salaries and capital expenditure in line with its annual budget. The board pays an imprest amount to the principal for financing the day to day running costs.

Powers

The boards act in an advisory capacity in relation to educational matters but have full financial control.

Responsibilities

School boards are responsible to the State Director of Catholic Education in his role as executive officer of the South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools. An annual report and budget for the ensuing year must be presented at an annual meeting open to all parents.

Meetings

Meetings are held monthly i.e. generally 10 a year. The chairperson has a deliberative and casting vote and a quorum is a majority of members provided the chairperson is present or held with his/her approval.

Tenure

All elected members hold office for a 12 month period.

Support

School boards receive no special financial assistance to help with their administration and they usually rely on the school's resources. The Catholic Education Office offers some assistance to boards through the provision of 2 consultant accountants.

Involvement in Curriculum

Generally there is little involvement although the 1976 school board manual (the most current) encouraged boards to assist the principal in formulating educational policies. The reaction to this varied enormously and largely depended on the role perception of individual principals and their willingness to involve others in areas that have traditionally been their sole preserve.

Involvement in Finance

The school boards have full financial control over the school. Boards normally present a draft annual budget to the State Director of Catholic Education in November each year. Directions as to priorities and limits of expenditure and school fees to be charged are exercised by the Catholic office through the approval or amendment of these and supplementary budgets. The board works closely with the parish pastoral council in discharging its financial management duties (including the payment of staff salaries and wages).

Involvement in Staffing

The principal is responsible for the selection and appointment of professional and ancillary staff after consultation with the president of the board and the chairperson. Staff appointments have to be made in relation to the school budget which the board has control of but the degree of consultation exercised by principals in staff selection and appointment varies considerably. Principal appointments either religious or lay are usually made with the consultation of the president and chairperson of the board.

Relationship of Principals to Board

While most boards have a secretary, the principal also carries out many of the executive duties of the board as far as implementing policies and decisions that affect the internal running of the school. Generally the relationship between boards and principals is a healthy one, with principals appreciating the help and support that a board offers them. As each school has a board, and as they have total financial responsibility

it is impossible for principals to ignore boards and work independently. Consequently a relationship of trust and co-operation is most facilitative for the optimal running of the school.

Relationship of Parent Welfare Bodies to School Boards

The existence of parent members on the boards in no way diminishes the contribution of parent welfare bodies. Boards are also empowered to work with a committee structure. Special committees are not limited to members of the board and as such provide an avenue for the wider participation of parents and friends of the school in the management function.

Further Information

- Ian Jones Catholic Education Office, 47 Waymouth Street, Adelaide. 5001 (08) 212 2261
- School Board Manual South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools, 1976.

Legal Basis

Victoria has four dioceses. Each has a Catholic Education Board or Council which is responsible to the respective bishop and functions as a forum for communication and development. The parish education boards are constituted as an administrative arrangement with these diocesan boards. Boards are usually established to provide the school with support, to look at the educational needs of Catholic children in other schools in the parish and to provide the parish with an appropriate forum in which educational matters can be formally discussed. The parish boards allow local educational management within an overall pattern in which they are linked with the diocesan boards. The decision to establish a board or not is a local decision, however.

Membership

The size of boards varies according to local circumstances. The suggested minimum size is 8 and the suggested maximum size is 12. A balance between educational, administrative, parental and other representatives is also encouraged. The parish priest, the principal(s) of the parish school(s) and the school accountant are members of the board ex-officio. Other Catholic schools in the parish have the right to be represented on the board by their principals. The principal is the executive officer of the board.

A parish educational board is normally composed of:

- parish priest (ex-officio)
- principal of parish school (ex officio)
- parish school accountant (ex-officio)
- a teacher from the parish school
- a representative of the parish catechetical group
- four parent representatives, at least one of whom shall have children at a school other than the parish school.

The parish priest is the president and can choose to also act as chairman or delegate this duty.

Functions

Parish education boards have the following duties:-

1. to act as a forum for discussion on matters concerning education in the parish;
2. to advise on matters that have specific reference to the school;
3. to refer to the Melbourne Catholic Education Board any matters it is not competent or willing to finalise;
4. to act as a two-way communication channel between individual parents, the diocesan board and the bishop;
5. to act as an advisory body to the parish priest on matters concerning the parish school;
6. to act as an advisory body to the principal in matters that pertain to the profession of teaching. It may establish general policies to give the principal a sense of direction but does not have the right to interfere in internal school management matters;

7. to act as a liaison body with appropriate local authorities;
8. to promote Catholic education;
9. to work co-operatively with school auxiliary bodies;
10. to foster provision for the religious education of children in government schools;
11. to be responsible for any matters specified by the Archbishop;
12. constitute the education committee of the Parish Pastoral Committee.

Powers

The boards act in an advisory capacity only.

Responsibilities

No formal responsibilities are specified.

Meetings

Boards are advised to hold at least six meetings a year, with at least one open meeting (usually for elections). Half the members constitutes a quorum for transacting official business. Each member has one vote.

Tenure

Elected members serve two year terms with a maximum of two terms. Half the elected members retire each year to maintain continuity of membership.

Support

The principal acts as executive officer of the board, presents reports for the board's consideration, assists in preparation of agenda items and generally provides professional leadership for the board.

Involvement in Curriculum

As an advisory board, the parish board may establish general policies but has no rights to participate in internal curriculum matters. Involvement is thus at the discretion of individual principals and parish priests.

Involvement in Finance

Forward planning involving surveying the needs of the parish is properly one of the functions of the board. The board may also arrange for the collection of school money and arranges ways of providing financial assistance to the school, taking into account diocesan and parish policy. The board may also pass the accounts to be paid as brought forward to the school accountant, and receives from the accountant regular statements as to the financial position of the school. The boards are also encouraged to be closely involved in the preparation of the schools budget. The Catholic Education Commission which allocates the government grants on a

needs basis usually pays the money to the parish priest but it is possible with agreement of the respective parties for funds to be paid to the parish education board.

Involvement in Staffing

The Boards have no rights to be involved in staffing issues but some principals consult boards for advice.

Relationship of Principal to Board

As the decision to establish a board is a local decision, the relationship of principals to boards varies accordingly to the role perceptions and personalities of individual people. Where boards do exist, the principal acts as the executive officer. The presence of the principal is of course crucial to the boards functioning.

Relationship of Parent Welfare Bodies to Parish Education Boards

The boards work co-operatively with the school auxiliaries or other similar bodies on the understanding that they are all working in their respective spheres for the same end - a better education for children.

Further Information

- Catholic Education Office Melbourne. (03) 654 2199
- Guidelines for Parish Education Boards Archdiocese of Melbourne, Melbourne Catholic Education Board 1976.

Legal Basis

The Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia introduced the board concept of shared local management into the Catholic system in 1974 after lengthy consultation with parents, principals, religious orders, clergy and bishops. Boards are constituted in accordance with regulations laid down by the Catholic Education Commission with the authority of the bishops and the major superiors of the religious teaching orders. They are not incorporated bodies.

Membership

School boards are made up of the following members:-

- the principal (ex-officio)
- the area priest or a nominee of the priests of districts served by the school (ex-officio)
- four persons elected at a school board annual school-community meeting open to parents of past and present pupils, past pupils who have completed secondary schooling, adult members of the parish, the teaching staff and current board members
- one person nominated by the parish council
- one person nominated by the Parents and Friends Association
- as many as two other persons who may be appointed by the board

Office bearers including the chairperson are elected by the board.

Functions

The functions of school boards are:-

- planning for the present and future operation of the school;
- engaging and discharging, on the recommendation of the principal, and in accordance with C.E.C. guidelines the lay teaching, auxiliary and maintenance staff;
- disseminating information about the school and about Catholic education;
- liaising in all matters relating to the financial management of the school with persons and organisations in the local Catholic community;
- managing all the finances associated with the school;
- advising the principal with respect to school policy that has financial implications.

Powers

The boards are deemed to have the power necessary to carry out any function authorised by the constitution.

Responsibilities

The board is required to disseminate information about board meetings and decisions to the school community, the parish council, the P & F Association

and all other groups and individuals interested in the school. The board is required to be an effective liaison agent between the school and the community serviced by the school.

Books of account are required to be kept to a professional standard and are subject to audit at the direction of the C.E.C.W.A.

A copy of the annual statement of each school's receipts and expenses must be available for perusal by any member of the school's community.

Meetings

Boards meet as the need arises (usually once a month). They are also required to report to the entire school community that it serves at the school board annual school-community meeting. At this meeting elections for board members are held, the chairperson presents a report on the board's operation and the presentation of a provisional budget for the ensuing year is made.

Tenure

Membership of the board is for a one year period in respect to elected, nominated and board-appointed members. Re-election is possible for up to six years.

Support

The principal is charged with the duty of being fully supportive of the board's efforts and as such carries out any executive functions to do with decisions affecting the internal management of the school. All members are bound by a code of ethics. Close liaison and support is given by the Catholic Education Office. No special financial allowance is given to the boards to handle administration expenses.

Involvement in Curriculum

Boards only have very broad and indirect duties regarding involvement in curriculum matters. They have responsibility for advising the principal with respect to school policy that has financial implications. The school's enrolment policy, for example, is one area that has to be carefully worked out and agreed to by the whole board. In other areas of curriculum the school board manual makes it clear that principals and staffs are encouraged to consult with their clientele, and that the school board is not the body to engage in such consultation. It is stated in the manual that it is outside the competence of board members to involve themselves in the internal operation of the school.*

Involvement in Finance

Upon adoption of the C.E.C.W.A. constitution for school boards, the financial management of the school is deemed to be conferred on the school board by the diocese. It is responsible to the C.E.C.W.A. for this administration and as such is required to account for and administer all income, recurrent and capital, from whatever source and all expenditure for the school. The boards authority to undertake financial commitments is limited to its known annual income. Close consultation with the C.E.C.W.A. is required in relation to borrowing and major capital

outlays. The board is responsible for paying, or contributing to all rates, taxes, insurance premiums, interest or other outgoings in respect of buildings and improvements to the school, and for the maintenance and upkeep of school buildings, grounds, equipment and furniture, and improvements or alterations of a structural or capital nature. Boards also make provision for payment of salaries and associated benefits of all employees.

Involvement in Staffing

School boards in accordance with guidelines issued by the C.E.C.W.A. and on the recommendation of the principal engage and terminate the services of the lay teaching, ancillary and maintenance staff. Basically the principal takes full responsibility for selecting staff and seeks the board's co-operation on making the appointments and paying salaries.

Relationship of Principal to Board

The school board manual specifies a number of clear and important responsibilities of principals towards the school board including sharing fully with the board all information from whatever source that may assist members in discussion and decision making; advising the board with respect to professional matters of education that have bearing on the board's function; and being fully supportive of the board's efforts.

At board meetings the principal speaks and acts for the whole school staff and for all students and must attempt to present unified views at board meetings. Staff meetings where board agenda items are discussed are therefore encouraged, as is the reporting of board decisions to staff.

Relationship of Parent Welfare Bodies to School Boards

The Parent and Friends Association of each school automatically has the right of representation on the school board by the allocation of one member position in the constitution. This ensures a relationship of informed co-operation between the welfare body and the board. Also the position of parents and other friends of the school is clearly held to be important in that the school board is not seen as the appropriate body for principals to consult on curriculum and other matters, but rather the parents and friends direct. Parent rights of complaint and advice are by no means restricted by the existence of the board and the right of direct access to the principal and staff is clearly recognised in the school board manual.

Further Information

. Chris De Silva Catholic Education Office, Salbade Road, Wembley. 3014
(09) 381 5444

. W.A. Catholic School Board Manual Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 1978.

* Note: The success of involving community people in the financial administration of Catholic Schools in W.A. has prompted the Catholic Education Commission to stimulate and support movements in a variety of schools to set up informal advisory councils that make provision for further community-school interaction with respect to the internal operation of the school. The three main areas of concern that these groups have tended to be involved with to date are: (i) curriculum offerings, (ii) school policy development, (iii) the development of innovations proposals.

CASE STUDY 8: QUEENSLAND CATHOLIC SCHOOL BOARDS

Background

In November 1978 the first of a three part report, Project Catholic "School" was released by the Catholic Education Commission of Queensland. The project had been set up with the task of designing an improved organisational and administrative framework for Catholic schools in Queensland. Part of the report suggested the development of a system of local school boards in the 285 Catholic schools in the state. The model proposed was only a suggested structure and the report anticipated a number of variations would be developed as the board concept was implemented according to the needs perceived by the people involved at the local level. A pilot project involving 16 schools or local community units is currently underway. After two years, a further report will be issued to the Catholic system authorities with recommendations for future policy regarding school boards in all schools. The structure described here is the one suggested in Project Catholic "School".

Membership

- ex officio members -
  (i) parish priest,
  (ii) principal,
  (iii) a representative of any religious order providing staff to the school (only if principal is lay).
- elected members -
  (i) one staff representative elected by the whole school staff(s),
  (ii) three parent representatives elected by the parent body,
  (iii) one member elected by the parish pastoral council.
- co-opted members - a maximum of two.

In the event of more than one school and/or parish to a board, all of the following categories are to be represented - parish priests, principals, involved religious orders and staff members - the total to be not more than five.

Functions

The school board is seen as co-operating with the school staff in developing the school's philosophy as a unit of Catholic education within the local community. Furthermore it is seen as having specific responsibilities in the areas of:

- Policy-making and management
- The provision and maintenance of suitable school buildings and plant
- Budgeting
- Staffing

As far as staffing is concerned, school boards would be consulted by the system authority in appointing lay principals. Appointments of teachers, associated professional staff (excepting religious staff) and ancillary staff would be by the school board on the recommendation of the principal.

Powers

The establishment of a school board would be a matter for decision by the local community or parish.

Responsibilities

The school board would have to prepare an annual operating budget covering all funds assigned to school purposes. It would also prepare for the parish pastoral council an estimate of any proposal capital developments.

Tenure

The term of office for elected and co-opted members would be two years. A system of retiring half the members each year is also suggested.

Support

The report recommends the appointment of liaison officers to central offices to assist schools in the establishment of boards. A special liaison officer has already been appointed to the Catholic Education Office in Brisbane for the pilot school board scheme.

Further Information

- Sister Francine Shaw, Catholic Education Office, 143 Edward Street, Brisbane, 6000. (07) 229 3744
- Project Catholic School: A blueprint for the administration of Catholic Schools in Queensland. Queensland Catholic Education Commission, November, 1978.

CASE STUDY 9: N.S.W. DE LA SALLE COLLEGE, KINGSGROVE

Background

De La Salle College is in the Archdiocese of Sydney and caters for boys in years 7-10. When the College changed over to a full lay administration in 1977 it was felt that there was a need for a body to perform some monitoring and control functions. The C.E.O. raised the idea of an advisory council and the constitution was subsequently developed by a committee comprising the principal and several parents. The council's status is one of advice and assistance with the principal retaining the major decision-making responsibility. In reality the principal has never rejected any recommendation of the council and the council is developing more into a governing body.

Membership

The advisory council consists of the following members:-

- official members
  - the principal
  - a nominee of the regional bishop
  - a nominee of the C.E.O.
- elected members
  - one full time teacher from the school
  - one person from the Parents & Friends Association
- appointed members - the principal may appoint members, with experience in industry or commerce, a profession or with other appropriate qualifications and experience.

The council has a maximum of ten members. If the C.E.O. fails to nominate a member, an additional P & F representative is added. Council offices cannot be held by any of the official members.

Functions

The council's objects are to advise and assist:-

a) in the planning, development and maintenance of the College
b) with finance and recommendations for the administration of the College
c) in implementing diocesan policies concerning religious education, secular education and admininstration.

Powers

Subject to the constitution, the Council:-

a) shall have representation on any selection committee which deals with the selection of a principal or first assistant;
b) may require the principal to submit a report on College activities;
c) may require organisations established within the College to submit a report on their activities;
d) may permit any person or group to address a council meeting;
e) shall prepare and approve estimates to do with financial and other College needs, and other information desired or needed in order to discharge its responsibilities and achieve its objectives;

f) shall make by-laws for the council's management;
g) may delegate its power, authority, duty or function to either a council member, a teacher, or a committee on which there is at least two council members.

Meetings

The council meets at least twice a term, though meetings may be called by the chairperson at any time. A quorum for meetings is a simple majority of members and decisions are made by majority vote.

Tenure

Appointed members have office terms of three years, and elected members are appointed up to a maximum of three years. Members are eligible for re-appointment or re-election.

Support

The school's administrative staff provides back up clerical services for the council and the principal acts in an executive capacity in implementing many of the council's decisions.

Involvement in Curriculum

The council provides an important service to the school in overseeing the general curriculum offerings, ensuring that a suitable balance is offered and providing a measure of continuity in the school for planning purposes.

The council has become involved only with broad curriculum issues - assessing current curriculum offerings, initiating new offerings (the specific curriculum for which is developed by the staff and approved by the council). The council sees clear boundaries between its policy initiatives in curriculum, and the actual development of curricula by the professional teaching staff.

Involvement in Finance

The council has no responsibility for raising funds and does not have a bank account of its own. Normal recurrent and capital funds are channelled to the school through the C.E.O. and the Catholic Building and Financing Committee. The school raises capital through school fees which it has discretionary use of. The budget for general school expenditure is prepared by the principal in consultation with the council, and the council gives final approval to the budget. Local fund raising is undertaken by the Parents & Friends Association and the council decides on priorities and make requests to the P & F to direct their fund raising towards council decided goals.

Involvement in Staffing

The council as part of its constitution has the right to be represented on the selection committee for the principal and vice-principal. The opportunity for this has not yet arisen in the time of the council's existence. The council is clear that they don't want any further involvement in staff selection. They see this as responsibility of the principal.

Relationship of Principal to School Council

The council is constituted as an advisory body to offer advice to and assist the principal in the management of the school. To date the principal although having the right and power to veto or disregard this advice has acted on every recommendation made by the council. The principal, in fact, sees himself as the council's executive officer, although the council still is dependent on the principal for information and leadership. The principal contacts the council members when anything of significance happens in the school and generally the relationship is one of good will and strong support and co-operation.

Relationship of the Parent and Friends Association to the School Council

The P & F elects representatives to the council. The council also gives a formal report on its activities to the P & F at its monthly meetings. Because it is represented on the council, the P & F feels it can raise matters and express concerns to the council that will be taken up and acted upon. The council also sees the P & F as the formal body of parents of the school and consults it when it needs to survey parent opinion. The co-operative relationship between the P & F and the council is exemplified in the council's setting budget priorities and calling on the P & F to support those priorities in their fund raising activities.

Further information

. Alan Coman Principal, De La Salle, Kingsgrove,
51 Caroline Street, Kingsgrove. 2208. (02) 50 5904

CASE STUDY 10: N.S.W. ST.JOSEPH'S PRIMARY SCHOOL LEETON

Legal Basis

The school board at St. Josephs was formed in 1970 following a request by the Bishop of the Wagga Wagga Diocese that all Catholic schools in the Diocese have boards. To assist the formation of the board some guidelines were issued by the C.E.O. though each school was able to develop its own constitution.

Membership

The board consists of the following members:-

- the parish priest
- the school principal
- a lay teacher elected by the lay teachers of the school
- parent representatives in the ratio of one parent per 100 pupils or part there of with a minimum of two parents
- a representative of the School Auxiliary
- a parishioner nominated by the Parish Council with the approval of the parish priest

Functions

The board has the following objects:-

i) to provide a forum for discussions concerning the school;

ii) to advise the parish priest on those matters concerning the school that according to diocesan regulations are his responsibility;

iii) to advise the principal and teaching staff in matters other than those referring to the internal management of the school;

iv) to determine matters that have specific reference to the school, such as:
   a) the preparation and control of an annual budget
   b) the submission of an audited balance sheet and final accounts to the Diocesan Education office, the parish and parents
   c) the collection of school fees on behalf of the parish
   d) the maintenance of school buildings and equipment
   e) the preparation and supervision of school expansions as may be agreed to by the parish
   f) the fostering of extra-curricula activities such as sport, arts and crafts, etc.

v) to do such other things as may be specified from time to time by the bishop.

Powers

The constitution specifies the following powers:-

i) the board may appoint delegates to parish, Regional and Diocesan Education Committees;

ii) the board may from time to time co-opt any other person that can assist the board to carry out its objects;
iii) the board may fill any casual vacancy that occurs. Persons so appointed hold office for the balance of the term of the replaced representative.

Responsibilities

Each month the board is responsible for sending a financial statement to the Diocesan office. The chairperson of the board also makes a written annual report which is sent to all board members and interested parents. At the more informal level the board actively involves itself in a communications exercise to promote good relations with parents and the Parents and Friends Association. A newsletter advises parents of all board and P & F meetings. On a reciprocal basis, parents contact board members with complaints or suggestions. The P & F has a representative on the board who reports back regularly to the P & F. Other board members attend the P & F meetings in support and to explain their areas of responsibility. Each year operating and capital budgets are presented to the P & F by the board and fund raising targets are discussed.

Proper minutes of all board meetings are also kept.

Meetings

The board meets as often as necessary to carry out its business with a minimum of six meetings a year. The chairperson and other officers are elected by the board. Decisions are made by simple majority vote with the chairperson having the power to exercise a casting vote on deadlock issues but only in order to maintain the status quo. Proxy votes are not allowed.

Support

The school employs a part-time clerical assistant who provides some administrative assistance to the board in the form of typing/duplicating circulars and correspondence, receiving and banking school fees, preparing and despatching cheques for board accounts, and part preparation of the monthly financial statements to the C.E.O. A heavy burden also falls on the officers of the board. The secretary prepares and circulates the minutes. The treasurer prepares monthly reports and the annual budget. The school fees officer keeps the school fees register and despatches school accounts and fee notices. The maintenance officer prepares the annual maintenance/capital budget and prepares proposals for capital projects.

Involvement in Curriculum

The brief of the board allows them to advise the principal and teaching staff on matters other than those referring to the internal management of the school. As such, the area of curriculum is one that is out of the board's ambit. The principal is responsible to the C.E.O. for the internal management of the school and constitutionally the board cannot interfere in this area. The board, however, can offer general advice which may have some curriculum implications, but it is at the discretion of the principal whether or not to accept the advice if given.

Involvement in Finance

In the early years of the board's existence the major part of its time was centered on money matters. This demand has lessened to a degree with the institution of a uniform accounting system by the C.E.O. but for the past seven years the board's involvement in finance has always centered around the annual budgets for operating income/expenditure and capital facilities for which they have control. At each meeting the board is provided with a cash statement showing actual budget comparisons allowing the board to modify the budget from month to month in order to help it meet its objectives.

The board has also operated as a fund raising body, mostly through organising working bees which the board also uses as a means of establishing social contact with parents.

Involvement in Staffing

Permanent staffing appointments are made by the C.E.O. in Wagga Wagga. The principal in her monthly report to the board advises the board members of staff changes and board members have no direct link with staff either by appointment or work direction.

Relationship between Principal and the Board

The principal gives a monthly report to the board and receives its advice on a variety of matters. The board acts as a forum for discussion and as such provides the opportunity for parent opinion to be communicated to the principal through the board. A recent case was that of the board conveying to the principal a feeling of dissatisfaction among parents of the method that the school used to report on student performance. The principal acting on this information organised a census among the parent body which received a 70% response. Discussion of this census took place among the principal and staff and the matter was eventually solved to the satisfaction of both parents and staff.

Relationship between the Board and the P & F Association

The P & F is able to maintain a formal communication channel with the board through its representative on the board. This representative reports to each P & F meeting on the board's activities and conveys to the board the opinions and wishes of the P & F. At the informal level the communication link between the board and the P & F has been one that has taken time to establish. Prior to the school board, the school auxiliary was the main provider of school facilities. When the board was established and assumed responsibility for all disbursements, it was natural for the auxiliary to feel that it had lost one of its responsibilities. The board had to work, therefore, at establishing its good will and credability. Board members attend P & F meetings in support of the P & F representative's report of board meetings and to explain their areas of responsibility. Discussion also takes place between the board and the P & F over fund raising targets in relation to the operating and capital budgets developed by the board.

Further Information

. Sr. Marie McAlister St. Joseph's Primary School, Leeton. (069) 53 3248

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

CASE STUDY 11: N.S.W. CRANBROOK SCHOOL
BELLEVUE HILL

Legal Basis

Founded in 1918, Cranbrook School is a company registered under the Comapnies Act 1936 as an Association not for gain and limited by guarantee. The management of the Association and the custody and control of its funds and property is vested in the Council of the school.

Membership

The Council consists of twenty three male members, twenty of whom must be members of the Church of England. Twenty members are known as "Elective Councillors" and are drawn from Association members. Two of these must belong to the clergy and at least ten must be layman. There are two "Nominee Councillors", nominated by the Archbishop, one of whom must be a layman. The remaining councillor position is for the president of the Old Cranbrookians Association.

Functions and Powers

As stated in the articles of association, the powers and duties of the council are as follows:-

> *"The Council shall watch over the concerns and welfare of the School shall provide for the maintenance and payment of all salaries bills and accounts shall fill up from time to time any vacancy in the office of Headmaster shall determine the number and salaries of Masters shall appoint and remove all officers matron and domestic servants (the power of appointment and removal of whom is not by any regulation expressly provided to be vested in any person other than the Council) shall fix all salaries wages and other allowances payable out of the funds of the School shall fix the annual and other periodical payments to be made for tuition of pupils and the terms upon which pupils shall be received as boarders shall fix the days for breaking up and assembling of the School and shall cause to be kept a correct register of all pupils their ages the date of entering and departure from the School together with the names of their parents or guardians."*

As well, the Council exercise all such powers of the Association as are allowed with respect to the Companies Acts.

Responsibilities

The Articles of Association and the Companies Acts under which they are registered require the Council to perform a number of usual duties associated with companies such as keeping proper books of account, annual auditing of those accounts, and holding annual general meeting and elections.

Meetings

The Council meets at least ten times a year and may call additional meetings as required. The Council operates with a number of sub-committees: the executive committee; the finance committee; the building and development committee; and the sports committee. These committees consist of Council

members, the headmaster and the bursar, and may co-opt other members where appropriate.

Tenure

At the annual general meeting the four most long standing elective councillors retire, and elections are held to fill their vacancies. Elective councillors may stand for re-election. The two nominee councillors also retire at the annual general meeting and these vacancies are filled by the nomination of the Archbishop. Nominee councillors may also be re-nominated on retirement.

Support

The administrative support of the Council is represented by the school's bursar who is the company secretary and such other office staff - accountants, typists, machine operators - as are necessary for the functioning of the School.

Involvement in Curriculum

The governing body/council determines the nature of the school curriculum but only in the light of recommendations made to the Council by the headmaster and members of the teaching staff.

Involvement in Finance

As the board of directors of a company, the Council is totally responsible for the financial dealings of the school. This responsibility is delegated in a number of ways. The finance sub-committee of Council deals exclusively with the business of the school and makes recommendations for action to the Council. Similarly the work of the building and development sub-committee has major financial implications for the Council to deliberate on. The preparation of the annual operating budget is the responsibility of the bursar and headmaster and is based on recommendations made by members of the teaching staff responsible for departments in the school. This budget is presented to the Council for approval.

Involvement in Staffing

The Council is responsible for determining the numbers of staff appointed to the school but only after consideration of recommendations made to it by the headmaster and bursar. Other staffing decisions are the sole responsibility of the headmaster.

Relationship of Principal to School Council

The headmaster is not a member of the Council. He is appointed by the Council, attends all Council meetings and executive committee meetings and acts as the chief executive of the school. He is the general manager of the school and as such works closely with the Council.

Relationship of Parent Bodies to the School Council

There is no formal parent and citizens association in the school. There are a number of loosely organised associations of parents such as the tuckshop

and school clothing pool groups which operate under the general surveillance of the headmaster's wife. The Old Cranbrookians Associations is represented on the board by the President of the Association for the time being, and there are always a number of parents on the Council.

Further Information

. Mark Bishop Headmaster, Cranbrook School, Victoria Road, Bellevue Hill, 2023. (02) 36 6864

CASE STUDY 12: N.S.W. ST. PATRICKS COLLEGE, STRATHFIELD

Legal Basis

St. Patricks College caters for over 1,200 boys from year four to year twelve. The College is owned by the trustees of the Christian Brothers. The principal and deputy principal of the school are both trustees. The day to day control and management of the school is the responsibility of the principal. In 1970 the then principal of the school decided to establish an advisory school board in order to promote the spirit of community effort among those who were concerned with the College and its future. The school board is therefore not a seperate legal entity but operates at the discretion of the principal of the college.

Membership

The membership of the board varies from time to time. The principal, deputy principal and headmaster of the junior school are ex-officio members. The principal is the chairman of the board. Other board members are nominated by the staff, the Parents' and Friends' Association and the Old Boys' Association. The number of nominees is determined by the principal. The principal (chairman) also has the right to nominate other board members. All members have the right to exercise a vote though decisions and recommendations are normally reached by consensus. Board meetings are open to staff members who may join in discussions at the indication and under the directions of the chairman. The chairman also has the authority to invite other persons to board meetings if he considers that they could assist board deliberations. Only board members have voting rights.

Functions

The board was set up to assist communication among all levels of the school community. The board functions chiefly as an instrument through which the principal receives opinion in a number of areas laid down in the constitution. These are: matters pertaining to school policy, organisation and conduct of the school; and the determination of the order of priorities for moneys received from the Parents' and Friends' Association that have not been allocated by the principal. The constitution also specifies a number of subjects that are the exclusive domain of the chairman (principal). These are: staff employment and control; school fees; salaries; A.M.M.A. Award; admission of individuals; staff appointments .. headmasters, subject masters, form masters; finance. The constitution also states that the principal has the right to periodically re-define the subjects that are listed as the exclusive domain of the chairman.

Powers

The power of the board is restricted to the credibility of its members' advice which is at the discretion of the principal to accept or reject.

Responsibilities

Minutes of every board meeting are taken and distributed to the members and the school executive. The school staff are also supplied with copies of the minutes within ten days of the holding of board meetings.

Meetings

The times and dates of board meetings are arranged by the chairman who also is empowered to convene special board meetings. Normally the board meets twice a term. There is no quorum specified in the constitution. The chairman decides whether sufficient members are present to open a meeting. Staff members may attend any board meeting without having to seek permission and may join in the discussion at the indication of the chairman. The chairman may give directions in regard to this participation which the staff member is bound to.

Tenure

The nominated members of the board serve 12 month terms although members are often re-nominated.

Support

The board elects from its own members an honorary secretary and a minute secretary who attend to all the secretarial and organisational duties required by the board. Typing and duplicating facilities are provided by the school to service the board's needs.

Involvement in Curriculum

The board's areas of reference are matters pertaining to school policy, organisation and conduct of the school and as such could be considered to cover certain aspects of the curriculum in the broad sense of the term. More recently the board has become involved in a more specific area of the curriculum in their advising on the broadening of curriculum offerings in the school. The staff prepared a curriculum proposal on a new course for the senior school and presented it to the board for their approval. Part of the preamble to this proposed syllabus was the statment - "the Board recognises that the aims and objectives of the syllabus may be achieved in a variety of ways and by the application of many different techniques. Success in the achievement of these aims and objectives is the concern of the Board which does not, however, either stipulate or evaluate specific teaching methods". The statement encapulates both a staff policy position and a board response and is indicative of the clear boundaries that the board perceives in its involvement in the curriculum area.

Involvement in Finance

Finance is one of the areas that is the exclusive domain of the chairman (principal) and the board is normally only involved in setting priorities for the expenditure of moneys received from the Parents' and Friends' Association that have not been allocated by the principal. More recently, the board has moved closer to having some further involvement in finance through the setting up of a select sub-committee of the board to look into ways and means of raising money, principally for the school's building programme.

Involvement in Staffing

Staffing is also one of the exclusive domains of the chairman (principal) and the board does not participate in any staffing matter.

Relationship of the Principal to the School Board

The board exists primarily to offer advice to the principal and its operation is largely determined by the principal through his role as chairman of the board. The fact that the board has been operating successfully for ten years and that members often accept re-nomination to the board is some indication of the co-operative and respectful relationship that exists between board members and the school principal.

Relationship of the Parents' and Friends' Association to the School Board

The Parents' and Friends' Association nominates members to the board at its annual general meeting. The nominees quite often are the executive members of the Association so there tends to be a close relationship and good deal of continuity between the two groups. The board also is involved in specifying priorities for the expenditure of part of the funds raised by the P & F for the school and this is also an indication of the spirit of partnership that operates within both groups.

Further Information

. Brother Bill Greening, Principal, St. Patricks College,
Edgar Street, Strathfield. 2135 (02) 763 1000

CASE STUDY 13: N.S.W. CURRAMBENA SCHOOL LANE COVE

Legal Basis

Currambena School was set up in 1970 by a group of parents and other educators to provide an alternative schooling environment where co-operation between teachers, parents and children was of central importance. The school operates as a registered association under the Companies Act, 1961. The school is administered by a council of elected teachers and parents who are members of the association. There is no principal at the school. One of the teachers also acts as a co-ordinator to facilitate the running of the school.

Membership

The council consists of nine members. The full time teaching staff elect three members, one of whom must be engaged in the pre-school and one in the primary school. There are three elected parent members, one of whom must have a child in the pre-school and one who must have a child in the primary section. The other three members of council are elected from the subscribers to the association, and are also usually parents. The council elects a chairperson and also appoints a secretary and treasurer. There is also an educational adviser on the council from an outside institution who assists the council in its work. This person does not have voting rights.

Functions and Powers

The council operates as the board of directors of the company. The Memorandum and Articles of Association authorise the council to have general management and control of the business, activities and policy of the association as well as the custody and control of all the property and funds of the association. The council operates as the main administrative body of the school.

Responsibilities

As a registered company, the council is obliged under the Companies Act to maintain the normal accountability processes to do with book-keeping, auditing, annual meetings and reports of the association. Minutes of every council meeting are taken and distributed.

Meetings

The council organises its meetings as needed. Decisions are made by majority vote of the members with the chairperson having a casting vote. Any three council members may summon a meeting of the council at any time. A quorum is one more than half the number of council members.

Tenure

The elected teacher and parent representatives on the council hold office for 12 months. The three subscriber members are elected for three year terms of office.

Support

The council as the chief administrative body of the school is able to organise its own support according to its needs. The school secretary is appointed by the council and executes much of the council's day to day business.

Involvement in Curriculum

The broad parameters of the school's operating philosophy are specified in the Memorandum of Assocation of the company. These are:-

2) To provide a school environment that:
   a) respects the individuality of the child
   b) fosters self determination in the child
   c) develops the child's creative and critical abilities
   d) stresses co-operation rather than competition

3) To maintain high academic standards consistent with the preceeding objects.

4) Consistent with the preceeding objects:
   a) the school shall be secular
   b) the school shall be co-educational
   c) no class shall have more than 25 pupils
   d) there shall be no school uniform.
   e) there shall be individual assessment and not competitive examinations
   f) it is the policy of the school to abstain from corporal punishment

5) To respect and safeguard the professional status of teachers.

6) To strive for co-operation between teachers, other educators, parents and children.

7) To allow for pupil participation in the affairs of the school and to encourage the involvement of the community outside the school.

8) To make use of the latest techniques and advances in education for the continuing development of the school and to stimulate educational thought and practice in Australia.

Within these guidelines the council theoretically has the power to determine the curriculum as it sees fit. In practice the specific details of the curriculum are usually developed by the teachers who report regularly to council and approach the council for approval of plans for new curriculum approaches. The council also has an education sub-committee which has responsibility for making education decisions when the need arises. This committee is made up of the teachers, two parent representatives and the council's education advisors.

Involvement in Finance

The council has total financial control and responsibility of the school.

Involvement in Staffing

The council is ultimately responsible for the appointment and payment of all staff. The council uses a sub-committee structure to facilitate the

selection, appointment and dismissal of staff. Full time staff can only be appointed on the recommendation of the Teaching Staff Appointment Committee. This committee consists of at least two members of the full time teaching staff and two or more educational advisors. Parents can also be on this committee. The membership of the committee is determined by the council on the recommendation of the education sub-committee. Similarly, full time members of the teaching staff cannot be dismissed except on the recommendation of the Teaching Staff Dismissal Committee. This committee consists of one parent representative, one teacher representative, one subscriber representative and one or more educational advisors. This committee is appointed by the council.

Relationship of Principal to School Council

The school does not have a principal per se. One of the teachers acts also as a co-ordinator to facilitate the running of the school. The present co-ordinator is a member of the council as one of the teacher representatives. This has been the custom in the history of the school but the co-ordinator is not necessarily a member of the council. The school is a co-operative body and all the staff and members of the association work together to fulfil the objects that the school was founded on.

Relationship of the Parent Body to the Council

There is no official seperate parent body in the school. The council is the elected administrative body and parents have a major say in the schools operation through their elected representatives on the council who form the majority. There is a great deal of parent involvement in the school however, and many of the initiatives are organised by the council. Parents are expected to play an active role in the day to day running of the school. Most parents enjoy a regular attendance at the school, helping in the class room or using their specialised skills in a variety of areas to teach the children. Parents also arrange meetings for social get-togethers, for fund raising and for educational discussions.

Further Information

. Virginia Winley Co-ordinator, Currambena School,
203 Longueville Road, Lane Cove. 2066 (02) 427 0644

SCHOOL ADVISORY COUNCILS

CASE STUDY 14: N.S.W. BIDWILL HIGH SCHOOL

Legal Basis

At the beginning of 1978, the Principal put forward to parents, staff and students various ways in which formal school-community relations might be established. One of these was the school council structure. With the support of the constituent groups the council was formed in May 1978. The Advisory Council operates on the basis of the principal's delegation of responsibility and grass-roots informal co-operation.

Membership

- principal of Bidwill High
- deputy principal of Bidwill High
- principal of Bidwill Public School
- deputy principal of Bidwill Public School
- three elected teachers
- one elected member of the ancillary staff
- one elected member of the cleaning staff
- four elected students
- three elected parents
- co-opted members

Functions

The aims of the council are twofold:

1. To provide a forum for those groups who have an interest in the school's policies and organisation and to advise the school with respect to:
   a) general curriculum:
   b) general organisation:
   c) social conditions:
   d) care and use of physical facilities:
   e) student welfare
   f) general aspects of staff/student, student/student and school/community relations.
2. To provide experience in meeting procedure for students and others not versed in these procedures.

Operation

Meetings are held as and when required and are open to observers. Sub-committees are formed for specific purposes and include at least one elected councillor and co-opted members, e.g. social committee, disadvantaged funds committee etc. Minutes and books of accounts are kept. The number of representatives of each group is decided by the council when appropriate.

The project is in the experimental stage and though it has functioned effectively to date, estimates of its success will have to await the test of time.

Measures taken to date to keep the council operating include:

a) council reports in each of the school's monthly bulletins;
b) advertising of parent representative's names and addresses

in school bulletins;

c) involvement of student and parent representatives, including councillors, in sub-committees;
d) council-sponsored activities such as socials, parent-teacher nights, general meetings of parents etc;
e) reports of council activities in local papers;
f) council approaches to local government bodies and Education Department on various matters affecting the school and school-community facilities.

Generally it is felt that the key to its continued operation is the recognition that it is an effective group, has legitimate, wide-ranging and worthwhile responsibilities and that its views are respected. The growth of the school and increasing variety of functions should enable more people to become involved and the range of council activities to increase.

Further Information

- Ms. L. Harris School Council Secretary, Bidwill High School, Bottles Road, Plumpton. 2761. (02) 625 5444
- Greg Andrews School Based Decision Sharing: Some N.S.W. Case Studies. N.S.W. School Based Decision Sharing Project: Sydney, 1979.

CASE STUDY 15: SOUTH AUSTRALIA PARA VISTA HIGH SCHOOL

Legal Basis

In 1979, with the aim of establishing a means of regularly informing the school and the school council of parental opinion on school issues, a system of council associates was set up. The system operates on the basis of grassroots informal co-operation.

Membership

The entire parent body was approached for volunteers to become part of a correspondence group who would fill in surveys from time to time on issues that were of interest to the school or school council. About 70 parents volunteered to be associates. These are people who did not want to join the formal council but who were pleased to offer their opinions to assist the council in its work. The associates do not form a random sample of the parent body, but the trends that appear in the regular surveys are thought to be useful by the school.

Operation

Major surveys are developed about four times a year on topics that are of current interest or business in the school or school council. The 'Council Associates' are distributed with the survey forms and they are completed and returned to the school in envelopes by the students. Associates sign the forms for verification purposes only. Names are not used in compiling results. When compiled the results are published and distributed to all staff and school council members. A report of the survey also usually appears in the school's newsletter.

The surveys are intended as an information gathering device to inform decision-making, and not as a form of decision-making in itself. In 1979 inquiry surveys were held on (i) school uniforms; (ii) reporting, and (iii) parents and school:the resolution of difficulties. The survey forms usually have a covering page setting out current school policy on the topic.

Further Information

. Walter Welburn Principal, Para Vista High School, Wright Road, Para Vista. 5093. (08) 264 7811

CASE STUDY 16: TASMANIA THE SHEFFIELD SCHOOL

Legal Basis

The Sheffield School Council was set up with the co-operation and delegation of the principal. The school is a state school.

Membership

- Principal and Infant Mistress, ex officio
- Two staff members elected by the staff
- One official representative from each of the Mothers Club and Parents and Friends to act for these clubs
- One member nominated from the Kentish Municipal Council
- Four people elected at a Special Annual Meeting to be called for that purpose.

Office bearers are elected by the council.

Functions

The general aim of the council is to promote the excellence of the school. The specific aims are to advise the Principal:

- on the relationship between the work of the school and the educational needs of the community;
- in broad outline on the general educational policy and philosophy of the school;
- on distribution and application of appropriate grants and funds;
- on matters relating to grounds, equipment and accommodation.

Responsibilities

A meeting of the total parent body is held in March of each year for elections and reports.

Meetings

The council meets at least twice a term. A quorum is made up of six members. All decisions are by majority vote, with the chairperson having a casting vote.

Overview

The idea for setting up a school council came about after two parents and two staff members went on a study trip to South Australia to look at school council operation in that system. The council has been functioning only one year (1979) but has not developed to its full role regarding policy matters. The first year was concerned with a major familiarisation process for council members - informing them about school organisation, administration and policy. The principal sees this as a great need as schools are far more complex than they appear to the outsider. The council has also been involved in developing a future plan for the school (the school has a farm attached) in conjunction with the Education Department.

The principal sees the main purpose of the council as helping him combat the major attacks on schools, by getting parents involved in a practical and meaningful way.

Further Information

. Robin Pegus Principal, The Sheffield School, Sheffield. 7306
(004) 91 1302

COMMITTEE STRUCTURES

CASE STUDY 17: SOUTH AUSTRALIA MORIALTA HIGH SCHOOL

Legal Basis

The legally constituted school council has developed a sub-committee structure to facilitate its work and to involve more parents in the decision making process. (See case study 2 for functions and powers of school council).

Membership

Each sub-committee is made up of one school council member and a varying number of interested, volunteer parents. The convenor of each sub-committee is elected by the members and details of their operation are also worked out by the members of each sub-committee.

Functions

The following functions were suggested as possibilities when the sub-committees were first set up in 1979.

1. Grounds:
   Beautification and development, e.g. tree planting, turf maintenance, fertilising, paving work, paths, etc.

2. Social activities and Fundraising:
   To assist with any social activities conducted for the benefit of students, staff or parents and to undertake fund-raising activities to support projects adopted by the council.

3. Sports and Recreation:
   Organisation of sporting activities (support of existing sports and introduction of new ones, enlisting coaches, officials, drivers, etc.) oversight of amenities and equipment. In general, to promote a wide-spread interest in organised sport, both during the week, at week-ends, and vacation periods.

4. Community Involvement:
   Oversight of the use of school facilities, the development of good community-school relationships, the support of educational programmes involving community service, community awareness, community research, recreation schools, inter-agency relationships.

5. The Ethnic Community:
   To promote and sustain good relationships between the school and the ethnic community and to encourage maximum involvement of students and parents who are members of that community.

6. Educational Issues:
   To encourage involvement of parents and students in consideration of the school's educational programme, e.g. curriculum, sport, teaching methods, reporting and assessment, homework policies, subject content, controversial issues (sex education, drug education, etc.).

7. Student Welfare:
   To have concern for all aspects of student welfare. For example, school amenities, recreation opportunities, uniform, discipline, rules, library facilities, social problems and school policies relating to such matters. Second-hand uniform sale.

8. Canteen:
   To have oversight of all aspects of the operation of the school canteen - finance, sales methods, nutrition, amenities, etc.

Operation

The sub-committees were designed with the view to involving more parents in the life of the school. Informality was therefore stressed and they were given virtually an open ticket to find their own identity and method of operation. In areas where the responsibility for decision-making is legally vested in another party (e.g. the principal or a full meeting of the school council) the sub-committees make recommendations to those parties. In areas where decision-making responsibilitiy is delegated to the sub-committee, decisions are made at that level. Several sub-committees have specific duties referred to them e.g. the educational issues sub-committee was requested to design and carry out a survey of parents. Each sub-committee is required to submit a written report of any meeting to the school council. These reports and the school council minutes are distributed to council members before each meeting.

Further Information

. Ian Laslett Principal, Morialta High School, Morialta Road, Rostrevor, 5073. (08) 337 0566

CASE STUDY 18: SCHOOLS COMMISSION DISADVANTAGED COUNTRY AREAS PROGRAM

Background

Since its inception in 1973, the Schools Commission has operated the Disadvantaged Schools Program in order to provide extra resources to schools in poorer localities where there had developed a traditional pattern of poor school performance, early school leaving and low career aspirations. In 1977 a new element was added to this program that concentrated specifically on the disadvantages suffered by childrem from country areas. The Disadvantaged Country Areas Program differs from its parent program in that whole areas rather than individual schools were identified for special attention. The Program's aim is to support and stimulate rural communities in their search for new and improved ways of providing education for their children. It does this by encouraging them to identify and use what they already have in their own communities and to use the special funding to supplement or mobilise these resources. A guiding principle of the Programe has been that communities themselves should make as many decisions about schooling as possible, since they are the ones affected by them. The tension, however, between the need for local participation in decision making and the need for experience and expertise more easily mobilised at the State or system level was also recognised and in the administration of the Program, each State has now developed a structure which allows for consultation among all interested groups from local school and community levels right through Area and State levels.

The Program in each state is administered on the policies and recommendations made by State and Area committees. The structure and function of these committees differs slightly from state to state.

State Planning Committees

The State Committees vary from three in N.S.W. (a representative from the government and Catholic system and a parent representative) to 23 in Queensland. Their functions include: liaison with the State Minister for Education and education authorities, the Schools Commission and other interested agencies; promoting an understanding of the Program by enunciating its principles and aims and establishing general guidelines for operation; receiving submissions from Area Committees; reviewing current provisions for country education and assessing needs; and making recommendations on areas to be declared as part of the Program. In general they advise and support area and local committees. The Victorian Planning Committee also provides a forum for public discussion on issues relating to country education.

Area Committees

The Area Committees are closely involved in the development of submissions, in the implementation of funded projects and in monitoring and evaluating the progress of the Program in the Area. In N.S.W. the three Area Committees are each comprised of:

- a representative from State regional administration
- a representative from Catholic administration
- eight representatives from school communities involved in the Program. These include teachers, parents serving on local

school committees and other community members.

The functions of the Area Committees in N.S.W. are to:

- communicate effectively the concept, purpose, objectives and operation of the Program in that Area;
- stimulate development of quality submissions;
- consider and recommend on submissions forwarded;
- report on the financial and educational aspects of all projects funded and the general implementation of the Program in the region.

Victoria has five Area Committees varying in size from 12 to 19. At least half of the members on all committees are drawn from the school community (other than teachers). Local principals and teachers also serve on these committees. Their stated functions are to:

- identify the resources in the areas;
- make an assessment of the needs of the communities;
- develop submissions to be considered by the Planning Committee;
- implement proposals which are approved by the Planning Committee;
- control funds given by the Planning Committee in connection with the Project;
- aid in the continuous monitoring and evaluation of the Project.

Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia also have local action committees and working parties at the local school-community level. These are mostly project based and after funding are almost totally autonomous in implementing their action projects.

In 1977 the first year of the Program, these local, Area and State Committees were responsible for overseeing the distribution of $4.11 million in funding.

Further Information

- Disadvantaged Schools Program, Learning to Share: A Report on the Disadvantaged Country Areas Program for 1977. Schools Commission 1978

CASE STUDY 19: VICTORIA HUNTINGDALE TECHNICAL SCHOOL

Background

The fundamental premise that Huntingdale operates on is that the school should be returned to its neighbourhood and that the chief decisions about it should be made there by those most deeply involved: the staff, the students, the parents and those who live around the school. Centralised control is therefore out and the school has developed an organic decision making structure to achieve this end. The three key elements are the school council, the academic board and the school meeting. The school operates with a mini-school organisation. Faculty meetings and sub-school team meetings also make decisions. Some of the sub-school team meetings are open to students and parents to attend, but few do, and the faculty and team meetings tend to be staff domains only, and as such will not be described.

The School Council

Membership of the school council comprises the principal (non-voting), four elected staff, four elected students, four elected parents, four elected community people from the local neighbourhood who are friends of the school, a representative of the municipal council and a ministerial representative. The council is a body corporate established by The Education (School Councils) Act 1975 and has significant legal powers that cannot be delegated to other bodies in the school (see case study on Vitorian School Councils for functions and powers).

Within its areas of decision making, the Council is concerned essentially with policy formulation and review. It receives recommendations from the school meeting and academic board and is serviced by various committees e.g. the Finance Committee (council representative, elected staff, principal, registrar, elected student); the Building Committee (council representative, vice principal, elected staff, student); the Staffing Committee (council representatives, elected staff, team leader, principal, vice principal, registrar, elected student). The Staffing Committee concerns itself with the staff employed by the school council (office staff, cleaning staff, ground staff, a youth worker, a chief librarian, the community programs officer) and with making recommendations on appointment of teaching staff through a Selection Committee (the Victorian Technical Division has a system of representative school based committees being able to interview and make a recommendation on the appointment of principal and vice principal; Huntingdale also had some flexibility over selection of other teaching staff through a special arrangement with the Education Department as an experimental pilot program).

The Academic Board

In reality the academic board is the general staff meeting held once a month after school for one hour. They are attended by the teaching staff and non-teaching staff. Meetings of the academic board are open to students, parents and school council members who have all voting and speaking powers. On some issues the staff reserve the right to exclude parents and students although this has happened only rarely. Meetings are concerned with making decisions that dictate the day-to-day operation of the school, particularly in terms of how the staff offer themselves in their professional role. These general staff meetings make final

decisions about matters which do not directly affect the rights of other elements in the school, i.e. matters which are seen to be of a professional nature. Matters which are not wholly the concern of the staff are taken as recommendations or motions to the school council or community (the school meeting). Each sub-school team takes responsibility in turn to run the meetings. They select a chairperson, compile an agenda and run the meeting in accordance with formal meeting procedures Decisions are by majority vote. Agendas and records of decisions are distributed to all staff members.

The School Meeting

It is at this meeting that the local community is most strongly represented. The local community is defined as anyone who lives or works within an area of about a mile radius from the school. Any member of the local community may attend these meetings (some have 400 people at them). They are also attended by parents, students and teachers. The principal and chairperson of the school council are expected to attend. They are not representative gatherings. If a decision is made by a meeting of mainly students that goes against the consensus of community feeling, for example, the next meeting would be well attended by adults and the decision re-debated. Meetings are held once a term in the evenings. Additional meetings can be convened if a group of sixty or more people want one. Meetings deal with matters regarding the school which concern the whole community. A typical agenda consists of reports from the principal and the school council chairperson, discussion about students leaving the grounds, the food sold at the canteen, and an anti-smoking campaign.

The chairperson for school meetings is elected at the first meeting each year. It is the responsibility of that person to run the meeting as he/she thinks fit. There are no specific meeting procedures set down. Decisions are reached by a majority vote and the attendance of 40 persons constitutes a quorum.

The whole school community is notified of meetings via the local press and members are invited to submit agenda items The chairperson and secretary then draw up an agenda which is then circulated to the community. Decisions reached at meetings are similarly circulated and publicised. As with other meetings, the school meeting has boundaries within which decisions are made. Outside these boundaries recommendations are made to the other elements of the decision making structure which have the final vote e.g. school council.

Overview

These three main decision making bodies are jointly responsible for the formation and revision of the school's Statement of Principles (school policy). Changes to the Statement of Principles requires the agreement of the three separate bodies.

Further Information

. Huntingdale Technical School, Bakers Road, Oakleigh South. 3167
(03) 579 2322

. Tony Delves, "Huntingdale Technical School" in Decision Making in the Educational Process, Australian Frontier: Melbourne, 1974

CASE STUDY 20: SOUTH AUSTRALIA BURRA COMMUNITY SCHOOL

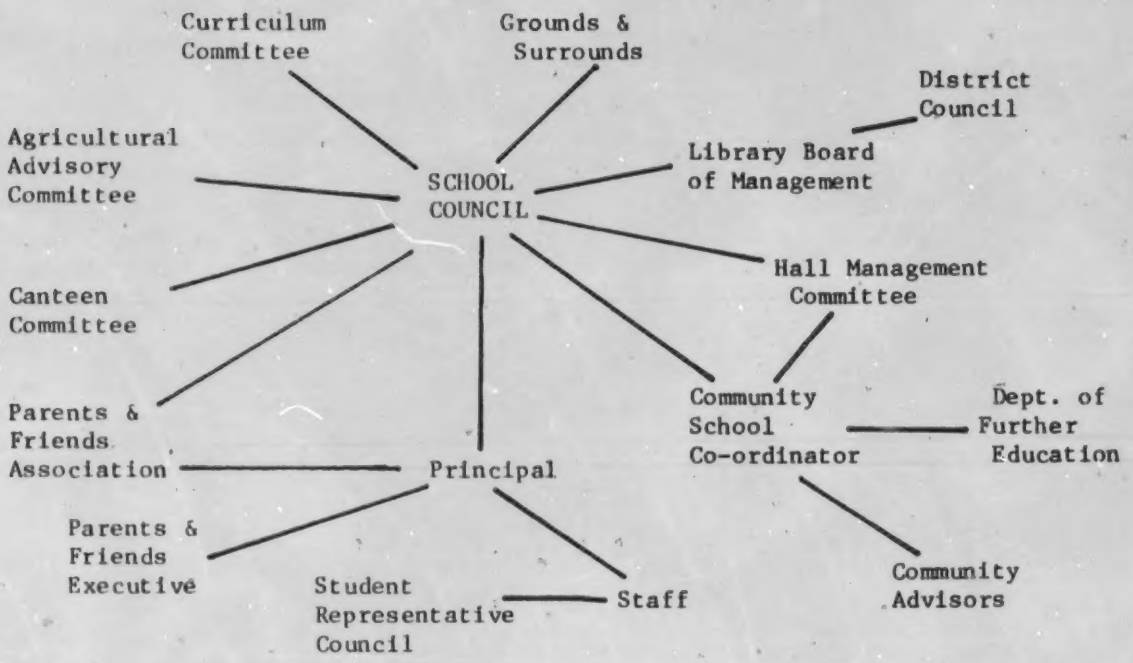
Background

Burra is a small rural town about 100 miles north of Adelaide. In 1976 the Burra Community School was established from the amalgamation of the high school and the primary school. The school caters for 460 students from Years 1 to 12 as well as providing a range of educational, cultural and recreational services for the whole community. The school was set up as a pilot scheme to trial the related concepts of 'community schooling' and 'community education'. The principal was appointed following an open advertisement for the position and a local teacher from the school was released to work as the community school co-ordinator to organise community education in conjunction with the Department of Further Education.

Varied structures have been developed at Burra in an attempt to involve as many local people as possible in decision making. The number of people formally involved in decision making through the school council, the Parents and Friends Association, and the numerous sub-committees of the school council is high. People are not only involved officially in management. The school also consciously acts informally to senitise itself to local needs, attitudes, and reactions through a network of community 'listening posts' who act as advisers to the school, by questionnaires, and by informal contact.

Management Structure

The Burra school council and the principal are ultimately responsible for all facets of school management. The school council was established by the Education Act of 1972-75 and has a range of powers and responsibilities (see case study 2 for details). The council consists of nominated representatives from the staff, students and Parents and Friends Association. The Principal and the community school co-ordinator are ex-officio members with voting rights. The council operates with a range of sub-committees which have delegated responsibilities to carry out work and/or make recommendations to the council for approval. The management structure at Burra is widespread as can be seen from the following diagram.



The structures that are being used successfully at Burra have been evolved over a period of four years.

The Curriculum Committee

One of the most interesting sub-committees of the school council is the curriculum committee. The committee was established as one of the moves made by the school council in its plan to involve community members in all levels of school management. The committee is open to anyone who is concerned and interested - teachers and community. The committee is elected annually with non staff members (the majority, 9 out of 14 members) holding 2 year terms. The committee aims to:-

1) uphold the philosophy of the school through the establishment of an appropriate curriculum
2) make specific recommendations about curriculum content
3) ensure the continuity of the curriculum and the continuity of staffing expertise
4) to act as a clearing house for ideas and opinions and regularly evaluate the school program.

The curriculum committee then has a right and responsibility to question what is being taught in the school and why it is being taught. While the committee reflects many of the problems and tensions of 'open' government of schools because it so intimately borders upon the sensitive area of professional expertise, the ready acceptance by the staff of the role of the committee is a sign of a healthy open climate.

Such a climate is partly due to the opportunity provided by the school's

administration to allow full staff paritcipation in decision making. Policy meetings are held each Wednesday afternoon with open agendas. The meeting is open to all staff, Council and Curriculum Committee members and policy decisions taken at these meetings are relayed to the full staff meeting without any opporutnity for further comment. Dissatisfaction with any decision must be communicated to the Principal within 24 hours to prevent the decision from becoming policy. If there is dissatisfaction it can be discussed again at the next policy meeting.

The Principal retains the right to veto any decision but this right has never been exercised. Staff who experience the opportunity to be involved in decisions which effect them do not fear community input via structures such as the Curriculum Committee. The professional teacher's right, under the direction of the principal, to decide on the methodology to be used in his/her subject areas is recognised by the school council and curriculum committee.

Chris McCabe, the principal sees the curriculum committee as a natural response to concern by parents about the curriculum and its implications for their children's future. This view is echoed in a statement from a committee member, Dennis Nettleton:

> We believe kids ought to be doing some things. It's part of community involvement that the community can ask for a curriculum to meet its needs. Parents must have the right to challenge what the school is doing....

Jeff Stirling, another committee member, is involved for different reasons:

> I'm concerned that the school and the curriculum committee could perpetuate single track ideas when there are lots of alternative roads. The school becomes the 'culture cop' and I'm deeply concerned at the arrogance of that monopoly that finds it so difficult to be sympathetic to individuals.

The work of the curriculum committee has changed as a result of its experience. Originally it discussed the course content and teaching with teachers. In the process problems arose over the variations in curricula over a wide age span of students and over interpretations of the teachers' restricted vocabulary. The principal's comment on this was:

> I appreciate that some people want and need to know about curriculum and we've got to meet that need, but we're going to have to be very patient with them.

That view was shared by Dennis Nettleton who found the curriculum "so laced with terminolgy we became lost".

As a consequence the committee withdrew from that area and focussed more on the basic needs of students as they leave school ready to go to work. They surveyed school leavers' attitudes which was useful in finding out shortcomings within courses and in the general appropriateness of the curriculum. This developed into attempts by the committee to determine what the core curriculum should be and the major components within it. Moves of this nature are not without their opponents both within and outside the committees. Committee member, Ian Allen sees problems in changing the curricula too frequently to suit the temporary needs of some groups:

> I don't think you should change the curriculum every 12 months just to suit the community. You need a basic curriculum that is on-going.

And, quite naturally, the principal is concerned at the possible staffing implications:

> If there's a demand, we have to meet the demand to the best of our ability. If we haven't got the personnel we cannot do it: if there are strong professional reasons against it then the staff and I would make a judgement on that basis. I couldn't envisage that happening.

The changes in the school curriculum have been fairly small out of sensitivity to local conservatism, aspirations, and needs. The principal explains this by reference to the community who have

> ...a bit of a fear of anything new. Educational innovation is a dirty word so we haven't done innovative type things - that's intentional. We don't want to do too much at the one time and changes will occur naturally.

The major change in the school programme has been to hold a well advertised community week in the middle of each term in which the public participate and which replaces the school elective programme. It consists of about 50 different courses run by teachers, Department of Further Education personnel, tertiary college students and lecturers, and local people. There are half and full day courses in a range of subjects from string and nail design, batik, folk music, and cane basketry to electronic music, computer programming, drama, film making, playschool supervision, motor bike safety, radio construction, and horse riding. The local policeman works side by side with parents and students in the welding course, and mothers and daughters work together at 'wool on the wall and floor' and many others. The courses attract an average of 100 adults per week (the school has some 400 children in K-12 years). At the same time, a week's work experience programme is organised in local stores, garages, offices, and building firms. For those at work in the day there are evening classes in such things as parenthood. The school camps are held in the same week to create more space in the school. In addition, students in their last year at the rural primay feeder schools come in for the week for acclimatisation. Some of the programmes are taken out as workshops to the larger feeder hamlets at Booborowie and Hallet which have begun their own community programmes. This move is important psychologically to ensure that the rural areas do not feel everything is being drawn into Burra.

The object of the community week is a consciousness raiser and public relations exercise: it is a tactic to involve adults and get them into the school to do things that they enjoy doing and get a sense of achievement at doing.

The success of the committee depends to a large extent upon the sensitivity and concern of the people who, in the early stages at least, control the actions and knowledge available to the committee - the teachers. Ian Allen thinks that

> in the last few years we've only just begun to get over the inferiority complex that parents have to teachers. We've broken the barrier and have begun to see them as other human beings giving particular services to the community.

Dennis Nettleton is concerned also that staff react too strongly to queries

that mean they have to justify the status quo but rightly points out that

> if the committee is to have any effect it has to make comment and criticism. It can't be just a gesture. We cannot be stifled by the staff.

Yet the defensiveness of the non-teaching members is in some ways a result of misperceptions and poor communications. A teacher on the committee believes that teachers in general do not reject the parents quering what they do and added:

> ... not only do they have the right to but there are one or two teachers I would like to question.

The principal is well aware of the final prerogative he holds over the committee's decisions and Dennis Nettleton acknowledges the principal's right to manage the teachers in matters of teaching method. The topics discussed by the committee made some conflict and misunderstanding almost inevitable as roles were defined and boundaries drawn. Yet nearly everybody appreciated the need for care, constraint, and sensitivity to avoid creating insecurity for committee members and in the last four years the committee has grown to be a significant influence in the life of the school.

The extensive nature of the communication network at the school and the decision making structure has enabled many people to contribute to the functioning of the school in ways which they felt most comfortable. Although the multiplicity of committees may appear cumbersome, their responsibilities are clearly described and the school council monitors progress effectively.

Further Information

- Chris McCabe, Principal, Burra Community School, Box 42, Burra, South Australia. 5417 Telephone: Burra 216
- David Pettit, Burra Community School: Burwood State College Case Study No.12.
  School and Community News, 1978,Vol.2, No.1

BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT

Legal Basis

Rosny College is a state school. The initiative to depart from the possibility of setting up a Board of Advice, and set up a Board of Management came from the principal after the school had been running for two years. The Education Minister gave permission for an interim board to be established in 1975. The board was asked to develop a constitution for a permanent board which they presented to the Minister in 1976. Late 1977, the Minister asked the Director-General to set up a permanent board of management on a three year trial. The trial ends in 1980. The interim board had developed a three point philosophy to guide its actions - one of these was that to fulfil properly the demands of the wider community, the college should be managed by its consumers.

Membership

The Board comprises a minimum of twelve and maximum of sixteen directors. These include:

a) the principal of the College, ex officio;
b) three members each representing a different facet of the college programme to be nominated by the Director General of Education;
c) one councillor of the Municipality of Clarence
d) four members of the teaching staff
e) two members of the student representative council
f) three members of the community association who are not teachers or students at the college;
g) two members of the public at large.

Functions

The Articles of the Board of Management state:

1) The board shall be responsible to the Minister.

2) The board shall be responsible for the management and control of the affairs of the Rosny College and in particular, but without prejudice to the foregoing shall:

   a) determine and implement the philosophy and objectives of the college;
   b) as and when appropriate prepare and submit to the Minister a budget for the expenditure of funds necessary for the management and control of the college;
   c) receive and expend funds in the management of the college;
   d) carry out such educational programmes as are appropriate;
   e) make available such facilities of the college for community use as are appropriate at such charges and upon such conditions as the Board shall deem proper;
   f) be responsible for the proper upkeep and maintenance of the building and grounds for the college;
   g) advise the Minister with respect to the execution of capital works in connection with the college;
   h) subject to all relevant statutory provisions, actively participate in the selection of the principal, the teaching staff, and public service and miscellaneous staff.

Powers

The board is responsibile to the Minister and acts with what powers the Minister delegates to carry out its duties. To date the board has only been allowed to operate with those powers normally delegated to the principal. This has limited seriously the board's ability to fulfil its functions as specified in the Articles

Responsibilities

The board is responsible to the Minister and presents a yearly report to that person. Minutes of every meeting are kept, and accounting and other records are kept as directed by the Auditor General.

Meetings

The board of management meets at least once a month, excepting January. The chairperson is elected, a quorum is half the directors and questions are decided by a majority vote, with the chairperson having a casting vote.

Tenure

Members are appointed for two years.

Further Information

. Brian Hortle Principal, Rosny College, Bastick Street,
Rosny, Tasmania. 7018. (002) 44 3244

SOME OVERSEAS APPROACHES

Legal Basis

Boards of Governors were first estalbished by the Forster Act of 1870. The Education Act 1944 gave a number of powers to these governing bodies that could be set up for individual schools or for groups of schools. While these boards included some community representatives, their powers were limited and in general, governing boards tended to perform a strictly management function and to often delegate many of their powers to the head or chairperson. In 1975 the Taylor Committee (22 members) was established to review the system of management and government in maintained primary and secondary schools in England and Wales. The report ("A New Partnership for Our Schools") was released in 1977 and contained nearly ninety recommendations. The report rests on three basic principles. The first is that a school's life and work are indivisible and that responsibility for its success is also indivisible. The second is that no group should dominate school government and that the four main groups concerned with the success of a school - the local Education Authority, the head and staff, parents (and in appropriate cases, pupils) and the local community - should share equally in the running of a school. The third is that each school should have a body on the spot composed on the basis of four equal shares with clear delegated responsibility from the L.E.A. for the success of the school.

The report recommends that legislation should be introduced as soon as possible (within five years at a maximum) to secure the implementation of its main recommendations on the composition and functions of the new governing bodies, their procedures and training. Since the time of the release of the report, the Department of Education and Science has issued a number of circulars to L.E.A.'s urging them to implement the report's recommendations. Many of the recommendations can be implemented by L.E.A.'s immediately without legislation.

Membership

The report recommends that the size of the governing body be in proportion to the size of the school with a minimum of eight members and a normal maximum of twenty four comprised as follows:

- one quarter of the governors appointed by the L.E.A.
- one quarter to represent the staff, always including the head teacher and elected representatives of the teaching staff, and of non-teaching staff on the larger boards
- one quarter to be parents of attending children elected by the parent body (provision is to be made in this group for eligible students)
- one quarter to be co-opted by the other three-quarters from people who can represent the local community.

Functions and Powers

The new boards of governers would have responsibility for:

- establishing the schools objectives
- sharing in the formation of the structure of learning, care and rules needed to achieve those objectives
- keeping under constant review the school's progress in achieving those objectives and making periodic reports to the L.E.A.

- sharing to a maximum extent in the budgeting for their schools, listing their priorities, preparing estimates, and having as much flexibility as possible in working within the approved budget and in the use of school-based allowances
- sharing equally with the L.E.A. in forming a joint appointments committee under L.E.A. chairmanship to select head teachers
- selection of other staff including non-teaching staff, with the right to delegate this task e.g. to the chairperson and head with appropriate experts from the L.E.A.
- establishing local guidelines for the letting of school premises to the community
- granting occasional holidays.

Responsibility

The representative nature of the governors appointments means that they must act with the fullest awareness of those whom they represent, and must also ensure that all the interests involved in a school's success communicate effectively with each other. The importance and responsibility for ensuring effective communication and maintaining good relationships is stressed in the Taylor Report. Staff, both teaching and non-teaching are guaranteed direct access to governors and minutes are to be available to them. Similarly, pupils are guarangeed direct access and the right to set up a school council if there is a desire for one. The governors also have the responsibility for writing to all new parents on enrolment setting out details of how they will be informed, consulted, and their help enlisted in involving them fully in the education of their children.

Meetings

The minimum number of meetings is suggested as being twice a term.

Tenure

Governors would be appointed within a four year frame. No attendance allowances are recommended, but travel, incidental expenses and proved loss of earnings allowances are recommended to be paid to governors by the L.E.A.

Support

Arrangements for clerical support are left to the L.E.A. Also it is recommended that to perform their functions properly, boards of governors should have access to the expert guidance of inspectors/advisors whose numbers should be increased where necessary for this purpose. Furthermore, the report suggests strongly that L.E.A.'s be required to ensure the provision of both induction and inservice courses for governors.

Further Information

- A New Partnership for Our Schools H.M.S.O. 1977

CASE STUDY 23: U.S.A. SCHOOL-COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARDS

Background

Advisory councils have a long history in the U.S.A. One of the earliest was started in 1919 in Berkeley, California by the Superintendent of Schools and the Chief of Police to look at youth problems in the area. Others emerged across the country during the depression and the "baby boom" years. Often they were temporary efforts to bring schools and the community together to address the social problems of the day. This tradition can still be found operating in many councils today.

The major upsurge of advisory councils has come since 1970 and is the result of several factors. Many were created with the influx of Federal funds into schools through programs such as Title 1, Head Start and Follow Through. Many of these programs had the aim of maximising the feasible participation of target community groups and actually required their representation in the planning and implementation of these programs in the schools. Many States followed these initiatives in their own local programs and administration. Advisory councils were also instituted as a means of implementing the court ordered desegregation plans in many cities. As well the concept of advisory councils has received strong support from national philanthropic foundations as a means for broad community development and as a mechanism for developing minority group leadership.

It has been estimated that in 1977 approximately 1,200,000 non-professional people were members of various school-community advisory councils and committees[1].

CASE STUDY: FLINT, MICHIGAN

Legal Basis

Many States and districts have issued administrative regulations to schools to establish school-community advisory councils as a means of implementing key areas of their general educational policy. The Flint Board of Education, for example, is strongly committed to the concept of community involvement in schools. Part of their policy statement on Parental and Community involvement states:-

> It is essential that individual parents, parents as organised groups, and other community organisations and agencies be involved in a meaningful way in the planning and implementation of school programs at all levels..... Not only is it desirable that parents, students, and other lay citizens be involved in the activities of the schools, but that educators be meaningfully involved in community affairs.[2]

These sentiments are echoed in all parts of the general policy document of the Fling Board. In 1972 the Flint Board of Education began establishing school-community advisory councils in all its schools as a means for implementing their stated goals and objectives. Guidelines are issued to each school in order that consideration is given to the appropriate and necessary areas of concern and importance in the development of each council. While the guidelines make suggestions on structure, membership

and by-laws their final make-up is the responsibility of each individual school community to determine.

Membership

Definite representation of the following groups is recommended: parents, residents, teachers, principal, assistant principal, community school director, students. Representation of organised school and community groups, para and non-professional staff, churches, businesses, senior citizens and youth clubs is also advised.

Residency in the neighbourhood is an added criterion for the community members. Councils are also instructed to ensure that their membership is representative of the racial and ethnic composition of the community and student body. Decisions about size and proportional representation are left to the council constituents to make, though the guidelines instruct that councils should be weighted in favour of the schools clients (i.e. parents, students and residents) not the administration and staff.

Functions

The guidelines recommend the following as the major areas of responsibility for school-community advisory councils:

"Communications
Each council should concern itself with improving the relations between the school and community. This can best be accomplished by fostering more and better lines of communication between the school staff and community residents. The development of a system of continual dialogue should be a necessary and major goal of each council. Efforts should be made to develop innovative techniques and methods to insure this necessary dialogue.

Building and Plant Utilisation
Each council should concern itself with the manner and extent to which existing school facilities are being used. A major goal should be to insure that each school is using its facilities to the maximum potential.

Each council should concern itself with investigating the potential to convert existing space within the school to a more useful and needed purpose. An appropriate example would be: the conversion of a school parking lot to a school playground.

Planning for New Schools and Renovations of Existing Facilities
Each council should be involved in the planning and development of any new school facilities for its community. This should include working directly with the school staff and architect to insure that the new facility reflects the needs and aspirations of the community.

Each council should be involved in the planning and development of any major renovation project that will be undertaken at the school. The council should work closely with the school staff and architect in achieving this goal.

Student Activities
Each elementary school council should concern itself with developing an interesting, diversified, and meaningful program of activities and events for the children who reside in the school's community. It is

essential that the council work closely with representatives of the student body in developing this program.

Adult Activities

Each council should concern itself with developing a diversified, interesting, and meaningful program of activities and events for the parents and residents of the community. Special emphasis should be given to finding a way to encourage parents to become active in the school, student and community sponsored programs, as well as adult programs designed for, and by, adults. It is recommended that a needs assessment survey be conducted to determine the needs and desires of the community.

Neighbourhood and Social Problems

Each council should concern itself with gaining a better understanding of the concerns and problems of its respective neighbourhood. The council should serve as a "clearing house" for neighbourhood problems--offering both advice and direct assistance in seeking ultimate solutions. It is anticipated that a council could become involved with such problem areas that relate to the school as re-development, housing, traffic safety, health, drugs, unemployment, crime, etc. To achieve the ultimate goal of eliminating these social ills and improving the quality of life in the community, it is further recommended that each council: relate to and work with the various groups and organisations that operate in its community; and utilise the resources of the school, social services, municipal government agencies, and all the interested parties--making specific referrals when it is deemed desirable and necessary.

Curriculum

Each council should be involved in reviewing the curriculum at its school to gain a better understanding of the educational program and be of assistance to the school staff in the continual development of a curriculum that is relevant and appropriate to the needs of the students and the community.

Human Relations

Each council should be involved in promoting human relations both within the school and the community. Emphasis should be placed on initiating, developing, and implementing programs and activities specifically designed to improve human relations. A special effort should be made to enhance the racial and ethnic interaction--between individuals and groups--both within the confines of the school and the overall community-at-large.

Humaneness in Education

Each council should assist in the development of a process that will encourage and insure that all students, parents, teachers, administrators, and others are accepted and treated, by each other, as individual personalities--fully recognising and appreciating that individual differences, wants, needs, and desires exist.

Community Affairs and Activities

Each council should instigate and implement a variety of activities and events designed to stimulate a true feeling of community--involving young children, teenagers, parents, senior citizens, school personnel, etc. Appropriate examples of these activities would be: fairs, carnivals, dances, dinners, receptions, contests, etc.

Co-ordination of Social Services

Each council should be involved in working with the various agencies and social services functioning in its community. Efforts should be made to develop co-ordination and to avoid duplication of services. It is anticipated that a council would work closely with such groups as United Fund agencies, health services, Model Cities, etc.

Code for Student Conduct

Each council should participate in the annual review of the "Code for Student Conduct" as stated in the procedures of the Board of Education." [3]

These functions are not inclusive and the principal and any council member can bring issues of concern to the council's attention for discussion and action.

Powers

State law vests ultimate responsibility for most areas of school policy in the Board of Education and its professional staff. The establishment of advisory councils is an administrative means of attempting to involve the community in school based decision making within the delegated powers of the Board of Education. The Board has stated that the council should be a central component in the educational structure in each school and should play a central advisory role in all the programs, policies, activities and functions of the school. The councils are seen not as end in themselves, but as a means of achieving goals.

Meetings

Regular meetings determined by a consensus of members are called for. Meetings of school-community advisory councils are open and most councils operate with a sub-committee structure. The recommended quorum is at least a third of the membership.

Tenure

The normal term of office for council members is two years. Terms of membership are structured on a 'staggered' schedule so as to ensure a continuity of membership.

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1. Davies et al. Patterns of Citizen Participation in Educational Decision Making: Volume II. I.R.E. Boston University 1979; p.38.
2. Flint Board of Education, Flint Community Schools Guildelines for School Community Advisory Councils. Flint, Michigan, 1973; p.3
3. ibid pp.10-12

Legal Basis

The Italian Legislation Decreti Delegati 1974 compels schools to establish School Councils and five other committees to run the schools' affairs.

"1. Class Councils

In primary schools (ages 6-11) there is a parent-teacher council for each class level. This consists of all the class teachers at the level and one parent elected for each class. So, if there are four grades one, the inter-class council will comprise four grade teachers plus four parents.

In the junior high schools (ages 12-15), each form has its own council, comprising all the teachers of the form plus four elected parent reps.

In senior high schools, each class council has the class teachers, two parent reps and two student reps. The student reps are elected by their classmates.

These class and inter-class councils have to concern themselves with the curriculum,teaching methods, experiments and special problems of their particular classes. Their general proposals go to a teachers' council for approval. Subsequently, the teachers of the class have to meet to figure out how to put decisions into practice. In the senior high schools, evaluations of students are made by the teachers only, meeting as the class council.

2. The Teachers Council

The teachers council consists simply of all the teachers, permanent and temporary. The principal is chairman. The teachers council's responsibilities are many and important. Here they are in the order they are listed in the legislation:

The teachers council:

a) decides on the general teaching program, and makes sure it meets local needs, is co-ordinated throughout the various disciplines, and does not transgress individual teacher's rights,

b) recommends on the composition of classes and on the timetable of school activities, taking into account the general criteria set out by the school council,

c) evaluates the school program regularly,

d) recommends textbooks and teaching aids, taking into account the recommendations of class councils and the budget of the school itself,

e) approves and promotes experimentation,

f) initiates further training for the teaching staff,

g) elects teachers to collaborate with the principal (one in a school of 200, two in a school of 500, three in a school of up to 900, and four in a school of more than 900),

h) elects teacher reps to the school council and the disciplinary committee,

i) elects the teacher assessment committee,

j) examines cases of students who aren't getting enough out of school, with the aim of improving their learning.

The teachers Council has to meet outside lesson time, at the beginning of the year and at least once a term. Beyond that, it may be called together by the principal, or by a request from at least a third of its members.

3. The School Council

In primary and junior secondary schools of less than 500 students, the school council has 14 members: six teachers, six parents, one from the non-teaching staff and the principal. Over 500 students, the council is 19: eight teachers; eight parents, two from the non-teaching staff, and the principal.

In senior high schools, the parent representation is halved, and three or four students added, depending on the size of the school. Student representatives have to be over 16 and may not vote on rules of conduct and supervision or on the buying and maintenance of teaching aids.

Staff representatives are elected by staff, parents by parents and students by students over 16. Parent reps then elect a president of the council and the whole school elects the school executive.

4. The School Executive

The council elects from its members one teacher, one member of non-teaching staff, and two parents. These plus the principal and the chief secretary make up the executive.

Between them, the school council and executive run the school's budget and decide on the general administration of the school. For example: they approve the general rules and time table of the school, they supervise the buying of equipment, they arrange for pupil supervision outside class, they seek contacts with other schools for visits, sport and so forth, as well as arranging for sporting and cultural activities within the school.

5. The Disciplinary Council

This council deals with student discipline. These councils exist only in high schools. In the junior highs there are four members, two teachers and two parents. In the senior highs, two teachers, one parent and one student, all elected by their respective groups.

Students who are aggrieved by a decision of this committee can appeal to provincial authorities.

6. The Teachers Assessment Committee

In terms of rising through the salary scale, promotion in Italy is automatic for permanent teachers (it is not easy, however, to be accepted for permanency). Assessments, therefore, are mostly for people wanting to transfer. It is entirely a staff committee plus the principal, comprising, for staff of less then 50, two teachers and one of the non-teaching staff, and for staff of over 50, double the number.

The members of the assessment committee are elected, and they assess only on request.

The same legislation that set up these committees at school level in 1974, also foresaw district, regional and national structures, but these are not yet established."

(From The Secondary Teacher)

Further Information

- Legge - Delega e Decreti Delegati, Editrice La Scuola, Brescia 1975.
- Bill Hannan, School Councils: The Italian Job. The Secondary Teacher. 1977,2, 5-7.